

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

No. 14

15th August, 1956

*On the Occasion
of the
84th Birthday Anniversary of Sri Aurobindo*

**SRI AUROBINDO PATHAMANDIR
CALCUTTA**



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of the
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CALCUTTA**

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Mother's Talks

PRAYER AND ASPIRATION

(1)

WHAT you do has an inevitable and absolute consequence. This is a necessary concept at a given moment of the evolutionary process. It is meant to prevent men from becoming completely egoistic or doing what they do in a totally unconscious manner. There are many who are like that, the majority, I suppose; they follow their impulses and do not ask what consequences their actions will have for themselves and for others. It is good then if someone told them with a severe air: "Take care, that has consequences which last long, very long". There are religions that rose to warn you: "You will pay for that in another life", "If you commit this sin, you will go into hell for eternity" and so on. That is, however, a most fantastic story that man has invented; still, people are frightened and checked in some way. It spares them a moment for reflection before they run after their impulses, not always, sometimes the reflection comes after, a little late.

In all religions people who declared that the consequences of Karma are rigorous and who gave these absolute rules, must have done so, I believe, to put themselves in place of Nature, to pull the strings that move ordinary men. For these rules are mental constructions, more or less sincere perhaps, cutting things into bits and telling you: "Do this or do that; it is not this, it is that." People are confused, frightened, they do not know what to do at the end.

What they must do is to get to an upper floor. And they must be given the key to open the door. The key is (1) a sufficiently

sincere aspiration, or (2) a sufficiently intense prayer. I said *or*, but it may not be so; there are people who like the one and there are people who prefer the other. But in both there is magic power and one must know to use them.

There are some who detest prayers. If they entered deep into their heart, they would see that it is pride, even worse than that, vanity. There are people who have no aspiration, they try but they are not able. They are not able, because they have not the flame of the will, nor have they the flame of humility. Both are necessary. To change one's Karma one needs a great humility and a great will-power.

The Divine Grace counteracts the Karma wholly; the Grace melts Karma, as the sun melts butter. If you have an aspiration sincere enough, or a prayer intense enough you can bring down into you something that will change everything.

(2)

I have already spoken to you of the different planes of consciousness. On the purely material plane (separating it from the vital), it is all absolutely mechanistic: there things follow each in a rigid chain of cause and effect. If you want to find the cause of a thing, you will have to find the cause of the cause; and if you want to find the effect of a thing you will have to find also the effect of the effect. The causes and effects linked together form a closed ring. Only, into this purely material plane there can intervene and does intervene the vital plane, as for example in the vegetable kingdom.

The vital plane has a totally different determinism, which is its own. And when you bring the vital determinism into physical determinism, that makes a combination which changes everything.

Above the vital plane lies the mental plane. The mental plane too has its own determinism in which all mental things are chained together in a rigorous sequence.

Each of these planes has what may be called a horizontal determinism.

But, as I say, there is also a vertical movement. That is to say, the mental descends into the vital and the vital descends into the physical. Thus there are three determinisms which intervene and produce something that is quite different.

* Where the mind intervenes the determinism will necessarily be different from the determinism where it does not intervene. In the higher animal life there is already an intervening mental determinism which is quite different from the determinism on the vegetal plane. Above these planes there are others up to the highest. The highest plane is the plane of absolute freedom.

If you are capable of traversing all these planes in your consciousness, so to say, in a vertical line and reach the highest and then through this joining up if you are able to bring down this determinism of perfect freedom into the material determinism, then you change everything. And all the intermediaries also will undergo the change. Because of these changes it will all look like total freedom. For the intervention or the descent of one plane upon another will have unforeseen consequences for the lower one. The higher planes may foresee, but the lower ones cannot. Being unforeseen, things and events have then an air of the absolutely free and the totally unexpected.

It is only when you live consciously and constantly on the highest level, that is to say, the level of the supreme consciousness, that you are able to see that everything is absolutely determined, but at the same time by the very complexity of the intermixture of these determinisms everything is absolutely free. You may call this phenomenon as you like, but it is a kind of absolute determinism and absolute freedom combined. It is the level where there are no contradictions, where all things exist and exist in harmony without contradicting each other.

(3)

Everything is possible. It is a gradual unfolding along a highway, as it were, which is unknown and unknowable to you. In the universe all will be unfolded. But in what order and in

what way? Everything is there absolutely, eternally but static. Everything is going to come out into the material world, naturally, more or less one after another. What course will the unfolding follow?

Up there, it is the domain of absolute freedom. Who tells you that a sufficiently sincere aspiration, a sufficiently intense prayer cannot change the course of the unfolding? It means everything is possible. This is one wonderful grace that has been granted to human nature. Only one does not know how to make use of it.

So, in spite of the most absolute determinism in the horizontal line, one can, if one is able to cross it and reach the highest point of consciousness, change what appears to be absolutely determined.

All theories are mere theories, that is to say, mental conceptions which are only representations or images of the reality, they are not the reality at all. When you say "determinism" or "liberty", you say only words. All that is very incomplete, very feeble description of That which Is, in truth, within you, around you, everywhere. And if you are even to begin to understand what the universe is like, you must come out of these mental formulas; otherwise you will never understand.

Indeed, if you live just for a minute only by this absolutely sincere aspiration, this adequately intense prayer, you will know more things than by meditating for long hours.

NOLINI KANTA GUPTA

Early Poems

Sri Aurobindo

THE SPRING CHILD

(On Basanti's birthday—Jyestha 1900)

OF Spring is her name for whose bud and blooming
We praise today the Giver,—
Of Spring and its sweetness clings about her
For her face is Spring and Spring's without her,
As loth to leave her.

See, it is summer; the brilliant sunlight
Lies hard on stream and plain,
And all things wither with heats diurnal;
But she! how vanished things and vernal
In her remain.

And almost indeed we repine and marvel
To watch her bloom and grow;
For half we had thought our sweet bud could never
Bloom out, but must surely remain for ever
The child we know.

But now though summer must come and autumn
In God's high governing
Yet I deem that her soul with soft insistence
Shall guard through all change the sweet existence
And charm of Spring.

O dear child soul, our loved and cherished,
For this thy days had birth,
Like some tender flower on some grey stone portal
To sweeten and flush with childhood immortal
The ageing earth.

There are flowers in God's garden of prouder blooming
Brilliant and bold and bright,
The tulip and rose are fierier and brighter,
But this has a softer hue, a whiter
And milder light.

Long be thy days in rain and sunshine,
Often thy spring relume,
Gladdening thy mother's heart with thy beauty,
Flowerlike doing thy gentle duty
To be loved and bloom.

A DOUBT

MANY boons the new years make us
But the old world's gifts were three,
Dove of Cypris, wine of Bacchus,
Pan's sweet pipe in Sicily.

Love, wine, song, the core of living
Sweetest, oldest, musicalest.
If at end of forward striving
These, Life's first, proved also best?

THE NIGHTINGALE

An Impression.

HARK in the trees the low-voiced nightingale
Has slain the silence with a jubilant cry;
How clear in the hushed night, yet voluble
And various as sweet water wavering by,
That murmurs in a channel small
Beneath a low grey wall,
Then sings amid the fitful rye.

O sweet grave Siren of the night,
Astrate's eremite,
Thou feedest every leaf with solemn glee,
Lo, the night-winds sigh happier, being chid by thee.

EUPHROSYNE

CHILD of the infant years, Euphrosyne,
Bird of my boyhood, youth's blithe deity!
If I have hymned thee not with lyric phrase,
Preferring Eros or Aglaia's praise,
Frown not, thou lovely spirit, leave me not.
Man worships the ungrasped. His vagrant thought
Still busy with the illimitable void
Lives all the time by little things upbuoyed
Which he contemns; the wife unsung remains
Sharing his pleasures, taking half his pains,
While to dream faces mounts the poet's song.
Yet she makes not their lyric light her wrong,
Knowing her homely eyes his sorrow's star
Smiles at the eclipsing brow untouched by care.
Content with human love lightly she yields
The immortal fancy its Elysian fields.

A THING SEEN

SHE in her garden, near the high grey wall,
Sleeping; a silver-bodied birch-tree tall
That held its garments o'er her wide and green;
Building a parapet of shade between,
Forbidding the amorous sun to look on her.
No fold of gracious raiment was astir.
The wind walked softly; silent moved a cloud
Listening; of all the tree no leaf was loud.
But guarded a divine expectant hush
Thrilled by the silence of a hidden thrush.

EPITAPH

MOULDED of twilight and the vesper star
 Midnight in her with noon made quiet war;—
 Moulded twixt life and death, Love came between;
 Then the night fell; twilight faded, the star had been. ♫

TO THE MODERN PRIAM

OF Ilion's ashes was thy sceptre made;
 'Tis meet thou lose it now in Ilion's fall.

SONG

O LADY Venus, shine on me,
 O rose-crowned goddess from thy seas
 Radiant among the Cyclades!
 O rose-crowned puissant like the sea.

And bring thy Graces three,
 The swift companions of thy mirthful mind,
 Bring thy sweet rogue with thee,
 Thy careless archer, beautiful and blind.

A woman's royal heart
 Bid him to wound and bind her who is free;
 Bind her for me!
 Nor for the sweet bright crimson blood may start
 In little rillets from the little heart
 Spare her thy sport to be,
 Goddess, she spared not me.

EPIGRAM

IF thou wouldst traverse Time with vagrant feet
Nor make the poles thy limit fill not then
Thy wallet with the fancy's cloying sweet
Which is no stay to heaven-aspiring men,
But follow wisdom since alone the wise
Can walk through fire with unblinking eyes.

THE THREE CRIES OF DEIPHOBUS

AWAKE, awake, O sleeping men of Troy,
That sleep and know not in the grasp of Hell
I perish in the treacherous lonely night
To foes betrayed, environed and undone.

O Trojans, will ye sleep until the doom
Have slipped its leash and bark upon your doors?
Not long will ye, unless in Pluto's realm
Have slumber, since forsaken among foes
I drink the bitter cup of lonely death
Unheeded and from helping faces far.

O Trojans, Trojans, yet again I call!
Swift help we need, or Ilion's days are done.

PERIGONE PROLOGUISES

COOL may you find the youngling grass, my herd,
Cool with delicious dew, while I here dream
And listen to the sweet and garrulous bird
That matches its cool note with Thea's stream.
Boon Zephyr now with waist ungirdled runs,
And you, O luminous nurslings, wider blow,
O nurslings of light rain and vernal suns,

When bounteous winds about the garden go.
Apt to my soul art thou, blithe honeyed moon,
O lovely mother of the rose-red June.
Zephyr that all things soothes, enhances all,
Dwells with thee softly, the near cuckoo drawn
To farther groves with sweet inviting call
And dewy buds upon the blossoming lawn.
But ah, today some happy soft unrest
Aspires and pants in my unquiet breast,
As if some light were from the day withdrawn,
As if the flitting Zephyr knew a lovelier word
Than it had spoken yet, and flower and bird
Kept still some grace that yet is left to bloom,
Had still a note I never yet have heard,
That, blossoming, would the wide air more illumine,
That, spoken, would advance the sweet Spring's bounds
With large serener lights and joy of exquisite sounds.
Nor have I any in whose ears to tell
This gracious grief and so by words have peace,
Save the cold hyacinth in the breezy dell
And the sweet cuckoo in the sunlit trees
Since the sharp autumn days when with increase
Of rosy-lighted cheeks attained the ground
Weary of waiting and by wasps hung round
The bough's fair hangings and Thea fell with these,
My mother, with twelve matron summers crowned.
Four times since then the visits of green spring
Have blessed the hillsides with fresh blossoming
And four times has the winter chilled the brooks,
Since sole I dwell with my rude father, cheered
By no low-worded speech or sunny looks.
Yet are we rich enough, fruitful our herd
And yields us brimming pails and store we still
Numberless baskets with white cheese and fill
Our cave with fruits for winter, and since wide-feared
My father Sinnis, none have care our wealth to spoil.
Therefore I pass sweet days with easy toil,

Nor other care have much but milk the kine
And call them out to graze in soft sunshine
And stall them when the evening-star grows large.
All else is pleasure, budded wreaths to twine
And please my soul beside my hornèd charge
And bathe in the delicious brook that speeds
Iris and water-lily capped and green with reeds.

Nor need we flocks for clothing nor the shears;
For when the echoes in the mountain rocks
Mimic the groaning wain that moving peers
Between thick trees or under granite blocks,
Our needs my father takes, nor any yet
Scaped him who breaks the wrestler as these twines
Of bloom I break, so he with little sweat,
And tears the women with dividing pines.
Therefore thin gleaming robes and ruddy wines
We garner, blickering swords in case
And burning jewels and the beautiful gold
Whereof bright plenty now our caverns hold
And ornaments of utter exquisiteness.
But if these brilliants of their pleasure fail,
The lily blooms from vale to scented vale
And crocus lifts in Spring its golden fire.
Our midnight hears the warbling nightingale,
The cuckoo calls as he would never tire;
Along our hills we pluck the purple grapes,
And in the night a million stars arise
To watch us with their ancient friendly eyes.
Such flowering ease I have and earth's sweet shapes;
And riches, and the green and hived springs.
Ah then what longing wakes for new and lovelier things!

*Bhawani Mandir**

OM

Namas Chandikayai

A TEMPLE is to be erected and consecrated to Bhawani, the mother, among the hills. To all the children of the mother the call is sent forth to help in the sacred work.

Who is Bhawani?

Who is Bhawani, the mother, and why should we erect a temple to her?

Bhawani is the Infinite Energy

In the unending revolutions of the world, as the wheel of the Eternal turns mightily in its courses, the Infinite Energy, which streams forth from the Eternal and sets the wheel to work, looms up in the vision of man in various aspects and infinite forms. Each aspect creates and marks an age. Sometimes She is Love, sometimes She is Knowledge, sometimes She is Renunciation, sometimes She is Pity. This Infinite Energy is Bhawani, She also is Durga, She is Kali, She is Radha the Beloved, She is Lakshmi, She is our Mother and the Creatress of us all.

Bhawani is Shakti

In the present age, the Mother is manifested as the mother of Strength. She is pure Shakti.

* Written by Sri Aurobindo and circulated during the Bengal-partition days in the early years of this Century. These Mss. were recovered only recently.—Editor,

¶ The Whole World is Growing Full of The Mother as Shakti

Let us raise our eyes and cast them upon the world around us. Wherever we turn our gaze, huge masses of strength rise before our vision, tremendous, swift and inexorable forces, gigantic figures of energy, terrible sweeping columns of force. All is growing large and strong. The Shakti of war, the Shakti of wealth, the Shakti of Science are tenfold more mighty and colossal, a hundredfold more fierce, rapid and busy in their activity, a thousandfold more prolific in resources, weapons and instruments than ever before in recorded history. Everywhere the Mother is at work; from Her mighty and shaping hands enormous forms of Rakshasas, Asuras, Devas are leaping forth into the arena of the world. We have seen the slow but mighty rise of great empires in the West, we have seen the swift, irresistible and impetuous bounding into life of Japan. Some are Mleccha Shaktis clouded in their strength, black or blood-crimson with tamas or rajas, others are Arya Shaktis, bathed in a pure flame of renunciation and utter self-sacrifice: but all are the Mother in Her new phase, remoulding, creating. She is pouring her spirit into the old; She is whirling into life the new.

We in India Fail in all Things for Want of Shakti

But in India the breath moves slowly, the afflatus is long in coming. India, the ancient mother, is indeed striving to be reborn, striving with agony and tears, but she strives in vain. What ails her, she who is after all so vast and might be so strong? There is surely some enormous defect, something vital is wanting in us, nor is it difficult to lay our finger on the spot. We have all things else, but we are empty of strength, void of energy. We have abandoned Shakti and are therefore abandoned by Shakti. The Mother is not in our hearts, in our brains, in our arms.

The wish to be reborn we have in abundance, there is no deficiency there. How many attempts have been made, how many movements have been begun, in religion, in society, in

politics! But the same fate has overtaken or is preparing to overtake them all. They flourish for a moment, then the impulse wanes, the fire dies out, and if they endure, it is only as empty shells, forms from which the Brahma has gone or in which it lies overpowered with tamas and inert. Our beginnings are mighty, but they have neither sequel nor fruit.

Now we are beginning in another direction; we have started a great industrial movement which is to enrich and regenerate an impoverished land. Untaught by experience, we do not perceive that this movement must go the way of all the others, unless we first seek the one essential thing, unless we acquire strength.

Our Knowledge is a Dead Thing for Want of Shakti

Is it knowledge that is wanting? We Indians, born and bred in a country where Jnana has been stored and accumulated since the race began, bear about in us the inherited gains of many thousands of years. Great giants of knowledge rise among us even today to add to the store. Our capacity has not shrunk, the edge of our intellect has not been dulled or blunted, its receptivity and flexibility are as varied as of old. But it is a dead knowledge, a burden under which we are bowed, a poison which is corroding us, rather than as it should be a staff to support our feet and a weapon in our hands; for this is the nature of all great things that when they are not used or are ill used, they turn upon the bearer and destroy him.

Our knowledge then, weighed down with a heavy load of tamas, lies under the curse of impotence and inertia. We choose to fancy indeed, now-a-days, that if we acquire Science, all will be well. Let us first ask ourselves what we have done with the knowledge we already possess, or what have those who have already acquired Science been able to do for India. Imitative and incapable of initiative, we have striven to copy the methods of England, and we had not the strength; we would now copy the methods of the Japanese, a still more energetic people; are we likely to succeed any better? The mighty force of knowledge which European Science bestows is a weapon for the hands of a

giant, it is the mace of Bheemsen; what can a weakling do with it but crush himself in the attempt to wield it?

Our Bhakti Cannot Live and Work for Want of Shakti

Is it love, enthusiasm, Bhakti that is wanting? These are ingrained in the Indian nature, but in the absence of Shakti we cannot concentrate, we cannot direct, we cannot even preserve it. Bhakti is the leaping flame, Shakti is the fuel. If the fuel is scanty how long can the fire endure?

When the strong nature, enlightened by knowledge, disciplined and given a giant's strength by Karma, lifts itself up in love and adoration to God, that is the Bhakti which endures and keeps the soul for ever united with the Divine. But the weak nature is too feeble to bear the impetus of so mighty a thing as perfect Bhakti; he is lifted up for a moment, then the flame soars up to Heaven, leaving him behind exhausted and even weaker than before. Every movement of any kind of which enthusiasm and adoration are the life must fail and soon burn itself out so long as the human material from which it proceeds is frail and light in substance.

India Therefore Needs Shakti Alone

The deeper we look, the more we shall be convinced that the one thing wanting, which we must strive to acquire before all others, is strength—strength physical, strength mental, strength moral, but above all strength spiritual which is the one inexhaustible and imperishable source of all the others. If we have strength everything else will be added to us easily and naturally. In the absence of strength we are like men in a dream who have hands but cannot seize or strike, who have feet but cannot run.

India, Grown Old and Decrepit in Will, has to be Reborn

Whenever we strive to do anything, after the first rush of enthusiasm is spent a paralysing helplessness seizes upon us.

We often see in the cases of old men full of years and experience that the very excess of knowledge seems to have frozen their powers of action and their powers of will. When a great feeling or a great need overtakes them and it is necessary to carry out its promptings in action, they hesitate, ponder, discuss, make tentative efforts and abandon them or wait for the safest and easiest way to suggest itself, instead of taking the most direct; thus the time when it was possible and necessary to act passes away. Our race has grown just such an old man with stores of knowledge, with ability to feel and desire, but paralysed by senile sluggishness, senile timidity, senile feebleness. If India is to survive, she must be made young again. Rushing and flowing streams of energy must be poured into her; her soul must become, as it was in the old times, like the surges, vast, puissant, calm or turbulent at will, an ocean of action or of force.

India Can be Reborn

Many of us, utterly overcome by tamas, the dark and heavy demon of inertia, are saying now-a-days that it is impossible, that India is decayed, bloodless and lifeless, too weak ever to recover; that our race is doomed to extinction. It is a foolish and idle saying. No man or nation need be weak unless he chooses, no man or nation need perish unless he deliberately chooses extinction.

What is a Nation? the Shakti of its Millions

For what is a nation? What is our mother-country? It is not a piece of earth, nor a figure of speech, nor a fiction of the mind. It is a mighty Shakti, composed of the Shaktis of all the millions of units that make up the nation, just as Bhawani Mahisha Mardini sprang into being from the Shakti of all the millions of gods assembled in one mass of force and welded into unity. The Shakti we call India, Bhawani Bharati, is the living unity of the Shaktis of three hundred million people; but she is inactive, imprisoned in the magic circle of tamas, the self-indulgent inertia

and ignorance of her sons. To get rid of tamas we have but to wake the Brahma within.

It is Our Own Choice Whether we Create a Nation or Perish

What is it that so many thousands of holy men, Sadhus and Sannyasis, have preached to us silently by their lives? What was the message that radiated from the personality of Bhagawan Ramkrishna Paramhansa? What was it that formed the kernel of the eloquence with which the lion-like heart of Vivekananda sought to shake the world? It is this, that in every one of these three hundred millions of men, from the Raja on his throne to the coolie at his labour, from the Brahmin absorbed in his Sandhya to the Pariah walking shunned of men, GOD LIVETH. We are all gods and creators, because the energy of God is within us and all life is creation; not only the making of new forms is creation, but preservation is creation, destruction itself is creation. It rests with us what we shall create; for we are not, unless we choose, puppets dominated by Fate and Maya; we are facets and manifestations of Almighty Power.

India Must be Reborn, Because her Rebirth is Demanded by the Future of the World

India cannot perish, our race cannot become extinct, because among all the divisions of mankind it is to India that is reserved the highest and the most splendid destiny, the most essential to the future of the human race. It is she who must send forth from herself the future religion of the entire world, the Eternal religion which is to harmonise all religion, science and philosophies and make mankind one soul. In the sphere of morality, likewise, it is her mission to purge barbarism (mlecchahood) out of humanity and to aryanise the world. In order to do this, she must first re-aryanise herself.

It was to initiate this great work, the greatest and most wonderful work ever given to a race, that Bhagwan Ramkrishna came

and Vivekananda preached. If the work does not progress as it once promised to do it is because we have once again allowed the terrible cloud of Tamas to settle down on our souls—fear, doubt, hesitation, sluggishness. We have taken, some of us, the Bhakti which poured forth from the one and the Jñana given us by the other, but from lack of Shakti, from the lack of Karma, we have not been able to make our Bhakti a living thing. May we yet remember that it was Kali, who is Bhawani, Mother of strength whom Ramkrishna worshipped and with whom he became one.

But the destiny of India will not wait on the falterings and failings of individuals; the Mother demands that men shall arise to institute Her worship and make it universal.

To get Strength we must Adore The Mother of Strength

Strength then and again strength and yet more strength is the need of our race. But if it is strength we desire, how shall we gain it if we do not adore the Mother of strength? She demands worship not for Her own sake, but in order that She may help us and give Herself to us. This is no fantastic idea, no supersession but the ordinary law of the universe. The gods cannot, if they would, give themselves unasked. Even the Eternal comes not unaware upon men. Every devotee knows by experience that we must turn to Him and desire and adore Him before the Divine Spirit pours in its ineffable beauty and ecstasy upon the soul. What is true of the Eternal, is true also of Her who goes forth from Him.

Religion the True Path

Those who, possessed with Western ideas, look askance at any return to the old sources of energy may well consider a few fundamental facts.

The Example of Japan

I. There is no instance in history of a more marvellous and sudden up-surgings of strength in a nation than modern Japan. All sorts of theories had been started to account for the uprising, but now intellectual Japanese are telling us what were the fountains of that mighty awakening, the sources of that inexhaustible strength. They were drawn from religion. It was the Vedantic teachings of Oyomei and the recovery of Shintoism with its worship of the national Shakti of Japan in the image and person of the Mikado that enabled the little island empire to wield the stupendous weapons of Western knowledge and science as lightly and invincibly as Arjun wielded the Gandiv.

India's Greater Need of Spiritual Regeneration

II. India's need of drawing from the fountains of religion is far greater than was ever Japan's; for the Japanese had only to revitalise and perfect a strength that already existed. We have to create strength where it did not exist before; we have to change our natures, and become new men with new hearts, to be born again. There is no scientific process, no machinery for that. Strength can only be created by drawing it from the internal and inexhaustible reservoirs of the Spirit, from that Adya-Shakti of the Eternal which is the fountain of all new existence. To be born again means nothing but to revive the Brahma within us, and that is a spiritual process—no effort of the body or the intellect can compass it.

Religion the Path Natural to the National Mind

III. All great awakenings in India, all her periods of mightiest and most varied vigour have drawn their vitality from the fountain-heads of some deep religious awakening. Wherever the religious awakening has been complete and grand, the national energy it has created has been gigantic and puissant; wherever the religious movement has been narrow or incomplete, the

national movement has been broken, imperfect or temporary. The persistence of this phenomenon is proof that it is ingrained in the temperament of the race. If you try other and foreign methods we shall either gain our end with tedious slowness, painfully and imperfectly, or we shall not attain it at all. Why abandon the plain way which God and the Mother have marked out for you, to choose faint and devious paths of your own treading?

The Spirit Within is the True Source of Strength

IV. The Brahma within, the one and indivisible ocean of spiritual force is that from which all life, material and mental, is drawn. This is beginning to be as much recognised by leading Western thinkers as it was from the old days by the East. If it be so, then spiritual energy is the source of all other strength. There are the fathomless fountain-heads, the deep and inexhaustible sources. The shallow surface springs are easier to reach, but they soon run dry. Why not then go deep instead of scratching the surface? The result will repay the labour.

Three Things Needful

We need three things answering to three fundamental laws.

1. Bhakti—the Temple of The Mother

We cannot get strength unless we adore the Mother of Strength.

We will therefore build a temple to the white Bhawani, the Mother of strength, the Mother of India; and we will build it in a place far from the contamination of modern cities and as yet little trodden by man, in a high and pure air steeped in calm and energy. This temple will be the centre from which Her worship is to flow over the whole country; for there, worshipped among the hills, She will pass like fire into the brains and hearts of Her Worshipers. This also is what the Mother has commanded.

II.—Karma—A New Order of Brahmacharins

Adoration will be dead and ineffective unless it is transmuted into Karma.

We will therefore have a Math with a new Order of Karma Yogins attached to the temple, men who have renounced all in order to work for the Mother. Some may, if they choose, be complete Sannyasis, most will be Brahmacharis who will return to the Grihasthasram when their allotted work is finished, but all must accept renunciation.

Why? For Reasons:

1) Because it is only in proportion as we put from us the preoccupation of bodily desires and interests, the sensual gratifications, lusts, longings, indolences of the material world, that we can return to the ocean of spiritual force within us.

2) Because for the development of Shakti, entire concentration is necessary; the mind must be devoted entirely to its aim as a spear is hurled to its mark; if other cares and longings distract the mind, the spear will be carried out from its straight course and miss the target. We need a nucleus of men in whom the Shakti is developed to its uttermost extent, in whom it fills every corner of the personality and overflows to fertilize the earth. These, having the fire of Bhawani in their hearts and brains, will go forth and carry the flame to every nook and cranny of our land.

Jnana, the Great Message

Bhakti and Karma cannot be perfect and enduring unless they are based upon Jnana.

The Brahmacharins of the Order will therefore be taught to fill their souls with knowledge and base their work upon it as upon a rock. What shall be the basis of their knowledge? What but the great *so-aham*, the mighty formula of the Vedanta, the ancient gospel which has yet to reach the heart of the nation, the knowledge which when vivified by Karma and Bhakti delivers man out of all fear and all weakness.

The Message of The Mother

When, therefore, you ask who is Bhawani the mother, She herself answers you, "I am the Infinite Energy which streams forth from the Eternal in the world and Eternal in yourselves. I am the Mother of the Universe, the Mother of the Worlds, and for you who are children of the Sacred Land, Aryabhumi, made of her clay and reared by her sun and winds, I am Bhawani Bharati, Mother of India."

Then if you ask why we should erect a temple to Bhawani, the Mother, hear Her answer, "Because I have commanded it, and because by making a centre for the future religion you will be furthering the immediate will of the Eternal and storing up merit which will make you strong in this life and great in another. You will be helping to create a nation, to consolidate an age, to aryanise a world. And that nation is your own, that age is the age of yourselves and your children, that world is no fragment of land bounded by seas and hills, but the whole earth with her teeming millions."

Come then, hearken to the call of the Mother. She is already in our hearts waiting to manifest Herself, waiting to be worshipped,—inactive because the God in us is concealed by tamas, troubled by Her inactivity, sorrowful because Her children will not call on Her to help them. You who feel Her stirring within you, fling off the black veil of self, break down the imprisoning walls of indolence, help Her each as you feel impelled, with your bodies or with your intellect or with your speech or with your wealth or with your prayers and worship each man according to his capacity. Draw not back, for against those who were called and heard Her not She may well be wroth in the day of Her coming; but to those who help Her advent even a little, how radiant with beauty and kindness will be the face of their Mother's.

Appendix

* The work and rules of the new Order of Sannyasis will be somewhat as follows:

I. General Rules

1. All who undertake the life of Brahmacharya for the Mother will have to vow themselves to Her service for four years, after which they will be free to continue the work or return to family life.

2. All money received by them in the Mother's name will go to the Mother's service. For themselves they will be allowed to receive shelter and their meals, when necessary, and nothing more.

3. Whatever they may earn for themselves, e.g., by the publication of books, etc., they must give at least half of it to the service of the Mother.

4. They will observe entire obedience to the Head of the Order and his one or two assistants in all things connected with the work or with their religious life.

5. They will observe strictly the discipline and rules of Achar and purity, bodily and mental, prescribed by the Heads of the Order.

6. They will be given periods for rest or for religious improvement during which they will stop at the Math, but the greater part of the year they will spend in work outside. This rule will apply to all except the few necessary for the service of the Temple and those required for the central direction of the work.

7. There will be no gradations of rank among the workers, and none must seek for distinction or mere personal fame but practice strength and self-effacement.

II. Work for the People

8. Their chief work will be that of mass instruction and help to the poor and ignorant.

9. This they will strive to effect in various ways:

1. Lectures and demonstrations suited to an uneducated intelligence.
2. Classes and nightly schools.
3. Religious teachings.
4. Nursing the sick.
5. Conducting works of charity.
6. Whatever other good work their hands may find to do and the Order approves.

III. Works for the Middle Class

10. They will undertake, according as they may be directed, various works of public utility in the big towns and elsewhere connected especially with the education and religious life and instruction of the middle classes, as well as with other public needs.

IV. Work with the Wealthy Classes

11. They will approach the zamindars, landholders and rich men generally, and endeavour—

1. To promote sympathy between the zamindars and the peasants and heal all discords.
2. To create the link of a single and living religious spirit and a common passion for one great ideal between all classes.
3. To turn the minds of rich men to works of public beneficence and charity to those in their neighbourhood independent of the hope of reward and official distinction.

V. General Work for the Country

12. As soon as funds permit, some will be sent to foreign countries to study lucrative arts and manufactures.

• 13. They will be as Sannyasis during their period of study, never losing hold of their habits of purity and self-abnegation.

14. On their return they will establish with the aid of the Order, factories and workshops, still living the life of Sannyasis and devoting all their profits to the sending of more and more such students to foreign countries.

15. Others will be sent to travel through various countries on foot, inspiring by their lives, behaviour and conversation, sympathy and love for the Indian people in the European nations and preparing the way for their acceptance of Aryan ideals.

After the erection and consecration of the Temple, the development of the work of the Order will be pushed on as rapidly as possible or as the support and sympathy of the public allows. With the blessing of the Mother this will not fail us.

SRI AUROBINDO

What is Essence?
A Note on Two Answers—
Shankara's and Sri Aurobindo's

I. THE ONTOLOGICAL VIEW: ESSENCE AS BEING.

ESSENCE, according to both Shankara and Sri Aurobindo, is the Reality which persists through all states and changes and of which all things and beings are ultimately constituted. It is the permanent underlying oneness which is the Self of all, the Supreme Spirit beside which nothing else exists.

But Shankara makes an irreconcilable opposition between the one and the many. In his eyes, what appears as many is really one: the manyness is seen because of ignorance, and all that characterises it is inapplicable to the one. Thus, consequent on his opposition of the one and the many, is the impassable gulf he digs between the status and the movement, the formless and the forms, the qualityless and the qualities, the immutable and the mutable, the infinite and the finite, the eternal and the temporal.

The complete division of the one from the many he considers implicit and inevitable in true reasoning about ontology. And his philosophy, which is founded on an intense experience of one Spirit or Self of all, has built out of that experience a system where essential reality is posited on one side and on the other a pragmatic or phenomenal reality which from the standpoint of the supreme essence is unreal, insubstantial, illusory. Instead of questioning whether his experience of stark unity is final or no, whether such unity can be ultimate in face of the endless multiplicity and diversity of the pragmatically real which it is said to underlie, he holds that logic itself demands finally the sole acceptance of this unity to the exclusion of phenomenal existence.

Sri Aurobindo does not deny the distinction between phenomenal existence and essential reality. But he differs from Shankara in his view of the nature of essence. To him the essential cannot be exclusive of the phenomenal in the sense that it holds no supporting truth of the terms in which the phenomenal exists. The terms of the phenomenal—the many, the forms, the qualities, the mutable, the finite, the temporal—must have their origin in the essential if the latter is truly to be their essence. According to Sri Aurobindo, there is no point, no logic in speaking of the essence of phenomena if essence is irreconcilably opposed to phenomenal existence. No doubt, they must differ, for unless they differed there would be no logical point in talking of the two. But to be essential is to base and make possible the phenomenal by something non-phenomenal in which the phenomenal terms are transcended without being annulled: that is to say, transfigured as well as transcended.

So Sri Aurobindo speaks of Reality and its manifestation rather than of Reality and illusion. His Absolute has two sides to its nature—the essential and the self-creative or dynamic. Both the sides are real and all that the self-creative or dynamic does is to bring out in form and movement what the essential contains in substance and status. Since Shankara's essential Spirit or Self does not contain in substance and status what exists phenomenally as form and movement, Sri Aurobindo considers it an experience partial with regard to not only the full Reality's two-sided nature but also that nature's one side called essential: it is the spiritual perception of an aspect of this side. As all aspects of the Infinite are themselves infinite in their own way, the Shankarite experience and perception is tremendous and splendid; yet, however grand, even however inevitable in the course of spiritual realisation, it is far indeed from being the supreme truth and terminus of Yoga.

The nature of the essence which is the rationale of phenomenal existence is very illuminatingly indicated by Sri Aurobindo in the following passage. "Since the spirit and essence of things is one, we are obliged to admit that all these many must be that One, and it follows that the One is or has become many; but how

can the limited or relative be the Absolute and how can man or beast or bird be the Divine Being? But in erecting this apparent contradiction the mind makes a double error. It is thinking in terms of the mathematical finite unit which is sole in limitation, the one which is less than two and can become two only by division and fragmentation or by addition and multiplication; but this is an infinite Oneness, it is the essential and infinite Oneness which can contain the hundred and the thousand and the million and billion and trillion. Whatever astronomic or more than astronomic figures you heap and multiply, they cannot overpass or exceed that Oneness; for, in the language of the Upanishad, it moves not, yet is always far in front when you would pursue and seize it. It can be said of it that it would not be the infinite Oneness if it were not capable of an infinite multiplicity; but that does not mean that the One is plural or can be limited or described as the sum of the Many: on the contrary, it can be the infinite Many because it exceeds all limitation...by finite conceptual oneness. Pluralism is an error..." (*The Life Divine*, p.304.)

The same point is made in Sri Aurobindo's commentary on the Isha Upanishad. "Brahman is one, not numerically, but in essence. Numerical oneness would either exclude multiplicity or would be a pluralistic and divisible oneness with the Many as its parts. That is not the unity of Brahman, which can neither be diminished nor increased, nor divided..." Sri Aurobindo goes on to say that Brahman is "identical, not single. It is identical always and everywhere in Time and Space, as well as identical beyond Time and Space. Numerical oneness and multiplicity are equally valid terms of its essential unity."

The whole question of trying to explain away multiplicity can arise only if we confuse essential with numerical oneness. If the question did arise with Shankara, he must have made a confusion of the two. This is a hard dictum but there is no escaping it. Not that he never truly conceives the oneness which is essential. He evidently does so when he says that Brahman's unity is not affected by the multiplicity in which we find it; but for him the world of essence has only a one-way traffic. Brahman, he holds, cannot actually be multiple although its essence is unaffected

by being found in the many. To be many is, in his opinion, to be divided and, if Brahman is actually many, Brahman suffers real division and would be composed of parts. It is on this ground that he combats the doctrine passing by the name of one Vrittikara who propounded it. Vrittikara reduced the unity of Brahman to a collection of finite objects in the universe and yet declared that that unity was as real as the multiplicity composing it. Shankara dubbed such unity a mere empty logical abstraction because it has no nature of its own. If anything is constituted only of its parts, then the parts alone are real. Here Shankara was irrefutable. Where he went wrong was in arguing that the existence of finites as a real expression of the essence must reduce the essence to a composite of parts. His basic axiom in this context runs: what has no parts cannot be multiple. The axiom is a tautology or a truism if both sections of it refer to essentiality: a tautology because it is tantamount to asserting that non-composite essence is non-composite and a truism because it boils down to postulating that essentiality, *qua* essentiality, is one and indivisible. If, however, the axiom bears upon the numerically multiple, as Shankara intended, the two sections are not genuine contradictories and Shankara, in passing to the second, has substituted in his mind numerical oneness for the essential unity which is not contradicted by even infinite multiplicity of number and in relation to which there is no need to regard the diverse phenomenal world of parts as irreconcilable with it and consequently unreal, insubstantial, illusory.

Once we grasp how the true essence transcends the opposition of one and many, we can proceed to grant that it need not be confined to the static, the formless and qualitless, the immutable and infinite and eternal, to the exclusion of movement, forms and qualities, the mutable and finite and temporal. For, what is here excluded by Shankara is what he takes to be the equivalents of the many, and if the many are in no way opposed to the true essence all that is equivalent to them should become *ipso facto* reconcilable with it. This certainly does not mean that the true essence is not static, formless and qualitless, an immutable infinity and eternity: it is indeed such and because it is such it is different

from the terms of phenomenal being. But its difference does not constitute an inability to be the source of those terms: its difference only implies that the true essence is more than what Shankara signifies by his account of it.

Shankara's account should be reinterpreted by us to indicate the freedom of the essence from limitation by those terms: the essence does not depend on them, they depend on it and it is not bound to a single kind of movement, form, quality, mutableness, finiteness, temporality or to a sum of possible kinds. The essence can be independent of those terms and manifest them in all possible kinds and this freedom from limitation by them can come only if it is what Shankara describes it to be. Shankara's mistake lies in converting the freedom itself into a limitation and saying that the essence is devoid of the power of manifesting itself in those terms. The terms in question are, in Sri Aurobindo's vision, perennial possibilities of the essence and while the essence lasts they can always be manifested. They may disappear, but they only pass out of manifestation into non-manifestation.

As manifestation and non-manifestation are more vividly contrasted by Shankara in terms of unitary status and multiple movement, than in any other, it will suffice for all of them to quote a few passages from Sri Aurobindo on their being complementary and inseparable. He writes: "The Self that is quiescent, at rest, vacant of things and happenings is a support and background to existence, a silent channel or hypostasis of something Supreme: it is not itself the one entirely real existence, not itself the Supreme. The Eternal, the Supreme is the Lord and the all-originating Spirit. Superior to all activities and not bound by any of them, it is the source, sanction, material, efficient power, master of all activities. All activities proceed from this supreme Self and are determined by it; all are its operations, processes of its own conscious force and not of something alien to Self, some power other than this Spirit." (*The Synthesis of Yoga*. p. 330.)

Sri Aurobindo tells us that it is such essence, Self, Spirit, one entirely real existence that the ancient Indian mind seized spiritually and philosophically. This mind declared: "Force is inherent in Existence. Shiva and Kali, Brahman and Shakti are one

and not two who are separable. Force inherent in existence may be at rest or it may be in motion, but when it is at rest, it exists none the less and is not abolished, diminished or in any way essentially altered." (*The Life Divine*, p. 78.)

• To put the matter from the other side: "The immutable silent Spirit may hold its infinite energy silent and immobile within it, for it is not bound by its own forces, is not their subject or instrument, but it does possess them, does release them, is capable of an eternal and infinite action, does not weary or need to stop, and yet all the time its silent immobility inherent in its action and movement is not for a moment shaken or disturbed or altered by its action and movement; the witness silence of the Spirit is there in the very grain of all the voices and workings of Nature." (*Ibid*, p. 305.)

Sri Aurobindo renders plausible to our understanding the inseparableness of status and movement by a few striking suggestions. Thus he says: "A solely silent and static Infinite, an Infinite without an infinite power and dynamis and energy is inadmissible except as the perception of an aspect; a powerless Absolute, an impotent Spirit is unthinkable." (*Ibid*, p. 304.) Again, he says: "All energy, all kinetic action has to support itself on status or by status if it is to be effective or creative; otherwise there will be no solidity of anything created, only a constant whirl without any formation: status of being, form of being are necessary to kinesis of being. Even if energy be the primal reality, as it seems to be in the material world, still it has to create status of itself, lasting forms, duration of beings in order to have a support for its action: the status may be temporary, it may be only a balance or equilibrium of substance created and maintained by a constant kinesis, but while it endures it is real and, after it ceases, we still regard it as something that was real. The principle of a supporting status for action is a permanent principle, and its action is constant in Time-eternity." (*Ibid*. p. 411.) From spiritual experience too Sri Aurobindo gives us a hint. Apropos of the silent Self he says: "It is when we arrive at something of this silence, stability, immobility that we can base on it a force and energy which in our superficial restless state would be inconceivable." (*Ibid*, p. 305.)

Here we may note that the greatness and importance of Shankara's silent Self is never denied by Sri Aurobindo. He has even called this experience the realisation of essentiality, but we must appreciate the context in which he has done it. As against exclusive knowledge of totality and exclusive knowledge of parts he speaks of exclusive knowledge of essentiality and puts it above the others and, with regard to the integral or whole knowledge which looks at all sides and all aspects and realises them in that in which they are one, he labels it as "a penultimate knowledge." (*Ibid*, p. 300.) However, he hastens to add that since this knowledge negates the totality and the parts "here too there is a capital ignorance" just as a capital ignorance is there when we see only the parts or only the totality. For, as he elsewhere remarks, there is not merely essence of being: there is also essence of nature. (*Ibid*, p. 425.) The nature manifests the being and in the ultimate essence the being and the nature are one and though the totality and the parts in their phenomenal character are transcended they are not negated and the immobility of status holds all potentiality of movement packed in it so that no contradiction enters into our saying that "it is only a pure infinite essence that can formulate itself in infinite ways." (*Ibid*, p. 302) The Shankarite Self is essentiality by contrast to totality and parts: it is not the essentiality by which the totality and the parts are explicable: it does not carry their *raison d'être*. So we should refrain from making too much play with Sri Aurobindo's designating the knowledge of it as "a penultimate knowledge": the designation gives no prominence to the realisation of the Shankarite Self as compared with the various other realisations found in Indian spirituality down the ages.

Vis-à-vis those realisations Sri Aurobindo has written of it: "There can certainly be no doubt of the validity—complete within itself—of this experience; there can be no denial of the overwhelming decisive convincingness—*ekātmya-pratyaya-sāram*—with which this realisation seizes the consciousness of the spiritual seeker. But still all spiritual experience is experience of the Infinite and it takes a multitude of directions; some of them—and not this alone—are so close to the Divine and the Absolute, so penetrated with the

reality of Its presence or with the ineffable peace and power of the liberation from all that is less than It, that they carry with them this overwhelming sense of finality complete and decisive. There are a hundred ways of approaching the Supreme Reality and, as is the nature of the way taken, so will be the nature of the ultimate experience by which one passes into That which is ineffable, That of which no report can be given to the mind or expressed by any utterance. All these definitive culminations may be regarded as penultimates of the one Ultimate; they are steps by which the soul crosses the limits of Mind into the Absolute." (*Ibid*, p. 420.)

It would be well to observe the word "penultimates" here and take the epithet "penultimate" of the other context in the proper perspective supplied by the former. The Shankarite experience is put on a par with other experiences that come with a sense of complete and decisive finality, yet, like it, fall short of the integral or whole realisation. In this connection we may quote the following: "An overwhelming self-evident convincingness, an experience of absolute authenticity in the realisation or experience is not an unanswerable proof of sole reality or sole finality: for other spiritual experiences such as that of the omnipresent Divine Person, Lord of a real Universe, have the same convincing, authentic and final character." (*Ibid*, p. 418.)

The integral or whole experience is clearly indicated by Sri Aurobindo. He speaks of the Supreme Reality as "an eternal and infinite and absolute self-existence, self-awareness, self-delight of being" and he adds: "this founds all things and secretly supports and pervades all things." He is careful not to identify the Supreme Reality with what Shankara describes as "Self" or "Atman". For, he says: "This Self-existence reveals itself again in three terms of its essential nature,—self, conscious being or spirit, and God or the Divine Being. The Indian terms are more satisfactory,—Brahman the Reality is Atman, Purusha, Ishwara." He also writes: "As there are three fundamental aspects in which we meet this Reality,...so too its power of Consciousness appears to us in three aspects: it is the self-force of that consciousness conceptively creative of all things, Maya; it is Prakriti, Nature or Force made dynamically executive, working out all things under

the witnessing eye of the Conscious Being, the Self or Spirit; it is the conscious Power of the Divine Being, Shakti, which is both conceptively creative and dynamically executive of all the divine workings. These three aspects and their powers base and comprise the whole of existence and all Nature..." (*Ibid*, pp. 293, 295.)

Here Sri Aurobindo mentions three terms of the Supreme Reality's "essential nature". Again, even with regard to "self" he writes in another place: the "realisation of Self as something intensely silent and purely static is not the whole truth of it, there can also be a realisation of Self in its power, Self as the condition of world-activity and world-existence." (*Ibid*, p. 314.) The Self in its power is what Sri Aurobindo calls "the self-force" of the supreme Consciousness "conceptually creative of all things, Maya"—Maya in the old Vedic sense: no illusive inexplicable magic somehow superimposed on the Self but that Self's own marvellous energy of formulation, energy which is as much the ultimate essence as is status or silence, although in its essentiality it is not energy expressed but energy contained.

The Supreme Reality, according to Sri Aurobindo, is on the one side the essence that is status and silence holding all creativity potential, and on the other the actual creativity within which all status and silence is yet inherent. The truer way of putting the fact is that the two sides are never separate but co-existent, or rather one existence severable only in our thought or our partial spiritual experience. The ultimate essence not only carries all form and movement in potentiality in the depths of sheer Being: it is also never dissociated from a sovereign all-formative all-moving expansion of Becoming. It is the Self that is posited in the Gita as Purushottama with His prakriti deployed in a higher Nature that is a divine phenomenon and in a lower Nature that is a phenomenon of mixed light-and-darkness progressively releasing the luminous from the obscure.

Compared to this Self, this essence, Shankara's selfhood and essentiality gives us but a certain spiritual abstraction from the truth, a partial glory of the Godhead's status and silence.

Of course, this self of Sri Aurobindo's which holds in substance and status what is released in form and movement by the

self-creative or dynamic side of the Absolute is a reality whose concept the mind cannot entertain with an easy familiarity. A sense of fathomless mystery, if not of impossibility, accompanies the mind's attempt to figure it, but that is to be expected of all mental figurations of the Absolute. This or that figuration may be more congenial to a certain bent of the mind: what, however, is gained in one respect is offset by a loss in another. The advantage the Shankarite may feel he has won by making the Being of Brahman void of the world and irreconcilable with it is counterbalanced by making the world an illusion, an enigma which cannot be and yet is or which can exist and yet is nothing. *Anirvacanīya*, meaning indescribable or inexplicable, is Shankara's characterisation of the mystery, the seeming impossibility, inevitable to his system and difficult for the mind to entertain in an easy or familiar concept. The mysteriousness involved by Sri Aurobindo's essence is therefore no disqualification: it is what all reasoning about the supra-rational involves. We have only to ask whether his mysteriousness is more comprehensively reasonable than Shankara's in an ontological view of essentiality.

2. THE AXIOLOGICAL VIEW: ESSENCE AS VALUE

Essence, according to both Shankara and Sri Aurobindo, is not only the ultimate Reality but also the ultimate Value, for it is not only permanent being but also permanent consciousness and bliss. The supreme Self of all, it is our absolute perfection and fulfilment.

Shankara contends that essence cannot be our absolute perfection and fulfilment unless it is the one to the exclusion of the many, and the opposite of all the terms applicable to phenomenal existence. In Sri Aurobindo's view, we who pass from phenomenal terms to the essence can never be said to find our absolute perfection and fulfilment unless we reach what gives us the final divine truth of all these terms as well as release from them, a supreme transfiguration rather than an entire annihilation of them in the midst of their transcendence.

"All our experience of phenomenal terms," says Shankara

in effect, "is an experience of limitation and imperfection: they bring no fulfilment." Sri Aurobindo agrees that phenomenal terms as at present experienced lack fulfilment, but he argues that this does not mean the absence of a fulfilling version of them in the ultimate essence nor the impossibility of a fulfilling version being realised even in phenomenal existence here and now. In fact, logic, in Sri Aurobindo's eyes, demands not merely a fulfilling version in what is the sole basic reality and therefore the sole basic origin of phenomena: it demands too that if there is such a version in the essence the possibility, nay even the certainty, is there of its realisation in phenomenal terms.

The failure to realise it so far is no argument: the failure may be due, must be due, to our not having found the supreme divine dynamism by which the phenomenal terms can be made to manifest in human development what they are implicitly in the essence and what they must be explicitly in the superior Nature of which the Gita speaks and which must be a divine phenomenon as contrasted to the phenomenon of mixed light-and-darkness that is the inferior Nature of our common experience. The Gita even says that our souls are existents of this superior Nature but it does not follow up its own clue and points to no dynamism whereby the qualities of the inferior Nature—*sattwa*, *rajas*, *tamas*—can cease to be mental, vital and physical limitations on the soul and Self and become free modes of a fully divine play on earth of the one who is the many and of the many who are the one. The dynamism which the Gita does not provide has to be discovered: that is all.

The question, however, of discovering this dynamism is not directly connected with the problem of Value in relation to the essence. Suppose the phenomenal terms are destined for ever to be limitations and imperfections. Then it does not help more to regard them as unreal, insubstantial, illusory than to regard them as real, substantial, actual. To regard them as the latter, says Shankara, is to impute lack of absolute goodness as well as of absolute manifesting power to the essence, for these terms remain at best with an irremovable element of evil and suffering in them. To regard them as the former, says Sri Aurobindo, is

to deprive the essence of being the sole existent, for somehow what is not of its reality, substantiality, actuality is admitted, and if a limit of however inexplicable a kind is admitted to its existence a limit is set also to its consciousness and bliss which are co-essential with that existence, and thus its ultimate Value is abrogated and then it cannot be our absolute perfection and fulfilment.

When we do not grant the possibility and the certainty of discovering an all-transformative divine dynamism, we have to hobnob with a paradox whether we look on phenomena as an illusive magic unfounded in Brahman or as an actual strangeness founded in It. Of the two paradoxes the one that takes the world to be insubstantial Maya can be shown ontologically to have less reason on its side, and axiologically it amounts to sitting in judgment on the Divine Goodness and to foisting on the Divine Power an incapacity of manifestation instead of humbly accepting the non-manifestation as an act of Divine Will beyond our comprehension. The paradox that takes the world to be enigmatic Lila or Play is not only more reasonable: it is also more virtuous and hence more justifiable from the axiological standpoint no less than from the ontological.

Against all these ideas we may imagine Shankara as recommending the experience on which he bases his philosophy. His plea would run: "Silent static unity of infinite selfhood gives absolute fulfilment because in it alone is all problem-consciousness, all *nisus* and hazard overcome. Other realisations do not overcome them since they are not self-sustained but sustained only by a relationship, no matter if the relationship be to a divine Lord and Lover. In these realisations *nisus* and hazard are allayed, not lost. They are lost only when the Seer abides within himself. In the silent static unity of infinite selfhood there is no going into a realisation or coming out of it, just to be is to have the realisation. That is also why other realisations are 'got' and hence liable to fall away from us, whereas this is intrinsic, inherent."

The first reply Sri Aurobindo would make is: "Does the Shankarite realisation involve being absorbed in what is called *nirvikalpa samadhi*, featureless trance? If it does, we have no

proof of *nisus* and hazard being lost, any more than we have it in other experiences by which one is rapt away from the problem-consciousness where *nisus* and hazard have place. Even dreamless sleep could then be considered freedom from *nisus* and hazard. A wakeful realisation is alone worth arguing about."

Shankara may be thought of as retorting: "I am not speaking of the *nirvikalpa samadhi* but of the *sahaja avastha*, the wakeful condition in which there is nothing except the Self and all plurality is assimilated by being realised as only the Self." Here Sri Aurobindo's reply would be: "In what way is plurality assimilated? Are the many not seen at all? If so, how can the condition be called wakefulness? On the other hand, if the many are seen as merely the one multiplied or multi-present then plurality is assimilated in the sense that the many are not seen as independent of the one or as other than the one, but is it assimilated so far as the many-ness of the many is concerned? No ground in the one is experienced for the undeniable perception that while the many are seen as the one the one also is seen as the many. And it is precisely because no ground is experienced for the manyness of the many that the many are felt to be unreal, insubstantial, illusory. Otherwise they would be felt as real, substantial, actual. If plurality were completely and satisfyingly assimilated, the theory of an illusive magic unfounded in Brahman would never be conceived."

Of course, the oneness remains unaffected by the plurality, even as the status by the many's movement, the formlessness by the forms, the immutable infinity and eternity by the mutable finites and transiencies. And because it remains unaffected there comes what Sri Aurobindo calls the "overwhelming decisive convincingness", the impression of "authentic and final character" of the experience, "the sense of finality complete and decisive"; but Sri Aurobindo points out, as we have already noted in the first essay, that "other spiritual experiences such as that of the omnipresent Divine Person, Lord of a real Universe" have the same convincingness, authenticity and finality. The completeness the Shankaraite feels is genuine, but it is of one sort and along one line and we have to see it from an independent standpoint and not take his feeling of loss of *nisus* and hazard as evidence

of no lack in his realisation. Other realisations can claim the same loss: the Shankarite realisation is not unique here.

And this leaves little room for saying that other experiences are liable to fall away while the Shankarite experience cannot. One can have glimpses and snatches of the silent Self, brief attainments from which one drops back, just as one can have temporary reachings of other aspects of the Supreme Reality. Nor is this realisation the only one deserving to be called "self-sustained". All realisations are attained through identity with something. Identity occurs when oneself becomes something or, rather, when something is found as oneself. In the Shankarite experience there is identity with the Atman. In the others there is identity with some other aspect of the self-existence, self-awareness, self-delight of the Supreme Reality. The identity is always founded in one's own being. One may keep losing the identity for a time, but the moment the permanent abiding within any aspect of the Supreme Reality is gained, that aspect is something intrinsic, inherent in the experiencer and there is no going into a realisation or coming out of it, for it is with one's own being that one gains it and the realisation is therefore self-sustained.

Merely because in this case we are found aspiring towards a God who is figured as other than ourselves we must not make a mistake about what is attained and how it is attained. The Shankarite too moves at the start towards a Self that is other than his usual selfhood: he has no initial experience of identity with it. The only difference is that he seeks an other by deepening his sense of his own selfhood, while the non-Shankarite does so by deepening his sense of an other. Still, they both reach a greater realisation of their own being and the reaching also is done by means of their own being. The fact that in some realisations, unlike as in the Shankarite, there is a relationship does not alter the self-sustained foundation of them all: the relationship introduces no insecurity or extraneousness, since it is a permanent relationship rooted in our own automatically possessed greater depth of existence. The Shankarite realisation is "self-sustained" by excluding relationship, the rest are "self-sustained" by including relationship: that is the only point of dissimilarity.

There is nothing to mark out Shankara's selfhood as the sole freedom from *nisus* and hazard and the problem-consciousness. Whatever freedom it affords is due, as with non-Shankarite spiritual attainments, to the exceeding in it of the human and mortal mind. But so long as the manyness of the many as well as their activity remains such as to necessitate a theory of illusion the true losing of *nisus* and hazard and of the problem-consciousness is wanting: the seed of them all is present, and it sprouts in the metaphysical system which, as Sri Aurobindo says, "gets rid of an original contradiction, a problem and mystery which may be otherwise soluble, by erecting another contradiction, a new problem and mystery which is irreconcilable in its terms and insoluble." (*The Life Divine*, p. 406.) Sri Aurobindo also remarks: "In the philosophy of Shankara one feels the presence of a conflict, an opposition which this powerful intellect has stated with full force and masterfully arranged rather than solved with any finality." (*ibid*, p. 413). This conflict and this contradiction derive from and reflect a spiritual experience that is partial and one of several "penultimates" in which the problematic, the hazardous, the *nisus*-natured is ever latent.

The experience, in its general character and at its common pitch, is well summed up by Sri Aurobindo: "It is aware of names and forms, it is aware of movement; but this movement does not seem to proceed from the Self, but to go on by some inherent power of its own and only to be reflected in the Self. In other words, the mental being has put away from himself by exclusive concentration the dynamic aspect of consciousness, has taken refuge in the static and built a wall of non-communication between the two; between the passive and active Brahman a gulf has been created and they stand on either side of it, the one visible to the other but with no contact, no touch of sympathy, no sense of unity between them." (*The Synthesis of Yoga*, p. 459.)

At its higher pitch the experience is described in some letters by Sri Aurobindo. In one he speaks of his seeing "with a stupendous intensity the world as a cinematographic play of vacant forms in the impersonal universality of the Absolute Brahman." (*Sri Aurobindo on Himself*, p. 127.) In remarks about himself

dictated apropos a phrase of Aldous Huxley's, he says: "There was an entire silence of thought and feeling and all the ordinary movements of consciousness except the perception and recognition of things around without any accompanying concept or other reaction. The sense of ego disappeared and the movements of the ordinary life as well as speech and action were carried on by some habitual activity of Prakriti alone which was not felt as belonging to oneself. But the perception which remained saw all things as utterly unreal; this sense of unreality was overwhelming and universal. Only some undefinable Reality was perceived as true which was beyond space and time and unconnected with any cosmic activity, but yet was met wherever one turned." (*Ibid*, p. 139.)

Another description, calling the experience Nirvana and formulating it in its extreme terms, runs: "It threw me suddenly into a condition above and without thought, unstained by any mental or vital movement; there was no ego, no real world—only when one looked through the immobile senses, something perceived or bore upon its sheer silence a world of empty forms, materialised shadows without true substance. There was no One or many even, only just absolutely That, featureless, relationless, sheer, indescribable, unthinkable, absolute, yet supremely real and solely real. This was no mental realisation nor something glimpsed somewhere above,—no abstraction,—it was positive, the only positive reality—although not a spatial physical world, [yet] pervading, occupying or rather flooding and drowning this semblance of a physical world, leaving no room or space for any reality but itself, allowing nothing else to seem at all actual, positive or substantial." (*Ibid*, p. 153.)

Here we have an account of what Shankara meant by Parabrahman, the indeterminate transcendence where the numerical categories of both one and many are inapplicable and an essential soleness is all. But when it is said that what is real is nothing save That, an indescribable Absolute, the sense of an unreality within it or borne upon it is still there, for though the many have disappeared as a reality they persist as "a world of empty forms, materialised shadows without substance". The many are left

as an unreality—and that is exactly the stamp of latent *nisus* and hazard, the seed of the problem-consciousness, the proof of the partial, showing that plurality and activity have not been completely assimilated. And as long as the complete assimilation is absent, the experience, judged from an independent standpoint, is not final and falls short of fulfilment, does not carry the supreme Value.

This lack of ultimateness was found by Sri Aurobindo himself, for in the autobiographical though “third-person” letter in relation to Huxley he says: “This condition remained unimpaired for several months and even when the sense of unreality disappeared and there was a return to participation in the world-consciousness, the inner peace and freedom which resulted from this realisation remained permanently behind all surface movements and the essence of the realisation itself was not lost. At the same time an experience intervened: something else than himself took up his dynamic activity and spoke and acted through him but without any personal thought or initiative. What this was remained unknown until Sri Aurobindo came to realise the dynamic side of the Brahman, the Ishwara and felt himself moved by that in all his sadhana.”

The same thing is stated in more detail in the letter about Nirvana: “I lived in that Nirvana day and night before it began to admit other things into itself or modify itself at all, and the inner heart of experience, a constant memory of it and its power to return remained until in the end it began to disappear into a greater Superconsciousness from above. But meanwhile realisation added itself to realisation and fused itself with this original experience. At an early stage the aspect of an illusory world gave place to one in which illusion¹ is only a small surface phenomenon with an immense Divine Reality behind it and a supreme Divine Reality above it and an intense Divine Reality in the heart of everything that had seemed at first only a cinematic shape or shadow. And this was no reimprisonment in the senses, no diminution or fall from supreme experience, it came rather as a constant

¹ In fact it is not an illusion in the sense of an imposition of something baseless and unreal on the consciousness, but a misinterpretation by the conscious mind and sense and a falsifying misuse of manifested existence. (Sri Aurobindo's footnote.)

heightening and widening of the Truth; it was the spirit that saw objects, not the senses, and the Peace, the Silence, the freedom in Infinity remained always with the world or all worlds only as a continuous incident in the timeless eternity of the Divine."

Sri Aurobindo goes on to say: "Now, that is the whole trouble in my approach to Mayavada. Nirvana in my liberated consciousness turned out to be the beginning of my realisation, a first step towards the complete thing, not the sole true attainment possible or even a culminating finale....It slowly grew into something not less but greater than its first self. How then could I accept Mayavada or persuade myself to pit against the Truth imposed on me from above the logic of Shankara?"

Sri Aurobindo refuses to accept Shankara's philosophy as "the sole possible, satisfying and all-comprehensive explanation of things." He observes: "It is not that at all. There are many other possible explanations; it is not at all satisfactory, for in the end it explains nothing; and it is—and must be unless it departs from its own logic—all-exclusive, not in the least all-comprehensive." (*Ibid*, p. 156.) Elsewhere he has said: "The Brahman, the supreme Reality, is That which being known all is known; but in the illusionist solution it is That, which being known, all becomes unreal and an incomprehensible mystery." (*The Life Divine*, p. 421.) And about the fulfilment offered by Shankara he writes: "The theory of Illusion cuts the knot of the world-problem, it does not disentangle it; it is an escape, not a solution: a flight of the spirit is not a sufficient victory for the being embodied in this world of the becoming; it effects a separation from Nature, not a liberation and fulfilment of our nature. This eventual outcome satisfies only one element, sublimates only one impulse of our being; it leaves the rest out in the cold to perish in the twilight of the unreal reality of Maya." (*Ibid*, p. 419.)

Not that the Shankarite experience is negligible or can be bypassed by the seeker. If Sri Aurobindo criticises it, he does so on behalf of other experiences equally grand or from a coign of spiritual vantage far beyond it. But, however great, clearly the essence it claims to give us cannot provide the ultimate Value. We move towards the truly fulfilling essence when we seek what,

in Sri Aurobindo's words, "includes and accounts for all so that each truth of experience takes its place in the whole." (*Ibid*, p. 420.) "It is only if you approach the Supreme through his double aspect of Sat and Chit-Shakti, double but inseparable, that the total truth of things can become manifest to the inner experience. The other side was developed by the Shakta Tantrics. The two together, the Vedantic and the Tantric truth unified, can arrive at the integral knowledge....It is already indicated in the Gita's teaching of the Purushottama and the Parashakti (Adya Shakti) who becomes the Jiva and upholds the universe." (*Letters*, 1st Series, p. 52.)

Essence as all-fulfilling Value can only be the substance and status which yet holds as potential truth whatever is brought out in form and movement by the other side of the two-natured Absolute—the side that is self-creative or dynamic and that constitutes with the side of the essential a unity of existence severable only in our thought or in partial spiritual experience and that in Sri Aurobindo's realisation and philosophy carries a luminous harmony of divinely dynamic manifested truth called by him Supermind whose evolving expression in phenomenal terms here is the entire meaning and justification of our cosmos.

K. D. SETHNA

Being and Becoming

THE great primal affirmation of the ancient Vedanta in regard to the Reality, immanent in and transcendent of the universe, is Sat, the infinite and eternal existence. But this existence was realised, not only as an infinite, immutable, impersonal existence, but as an infinite and immortal *Existent*, a Being, a Purusha, a Person. The Purusha or the *Person* is the supreme affirmation of the Veda and the early Vedanta¹ in respect of the universal and transcendent Reality, and He was realised as Sat-Chit-Ananda, the infinite Existence-Consciousness-Bliss.

How does this Purusha stand in relation to the Akshara, the Immutable, and the Avyakta, the Unmanifest?

According to the later Vedanta, the Akshara or the Avyakta is the supreme Reality, and all ascription of beinghood or personality to the immutable Impersonal can be safely branded as anthropomorphism, a result of Maya or Avidya, illusion or ignorance. The Being or Purusha of the Veda and the Upanishads is relegated to the categories of Apra Brahman or Karya Brahman, and the passive, immobile status of the Absolute is considered as the highest. This division of the Indivisible into the Impersonal and the Personal, the static and the dynamic, the Transcendent and the Immanent, the One and the many, is a mental error elevated to the sphere of philosophy and even projected into spiritual experience. The exclusive tendency of the human mind towards the remote and the recondite, the abstract and the impalpable, is responsible for this fateful bifurcation of the One without a second, *ekamevādvitīyam*. In shooting towards the crest, it denies or neglects the base. But the whole teaching of the Vedas and the

¹ It must not be confused with pantheistic or any other brand of Personalism of Western philosophy.

Upanishads gives the direct lie to this dichotomy, this characterisation of the Ishwara and the universe as the creation of Maya or Prakriti, and the relationless, featureless Brahman as the sole, unthinkable Reality. By a certain jugglery of words and the devious use of some images and analogies, the *Jagannivāsa* (One who has the whole world as His abode) has been conjured out of His universal existence and left suspended in His inconceivable, incommunicable transcendence. The One has been clamped down to His unity and declared incapable of diversity. Its Consciousness-Force (Chit-tapas) has been condemned to eternal impotence and stagnation. Its self-delight (Ananda) has been commanded to abide as a sea eternally calm and still, with no waves, no surges, no ripples, no foam stirring and dappling the frozen monotony of its white surface. Its infinite Light has been forbidden to radiate or lend itself to any play of spectrum and focus. All the incalculable potentialities of the Brahman have been frowned upon into sterility and covered up with the mantle of a fathomless silence. The logic of the finite human mind has thus circumvented the logic of the Infinite Consciousness, and, stripping the Absolute of all Its teeming relativities, buried It in the abyss of the measureless Non-Being.

But the Upanishads declare in no uncertain terms that the Purusha is the supreme Reality, the Being of all beings, and that He is *higher than the Akshara*, the Immutable:

“He, the Divine, the formless Spirit, even He is the outward and the inward and He is the Unborn; He is beyond life, beyond mind, luminous, *Supreme beyond the Immutable (Akshara)*.”
—*Mundaka*—II. 1

And they have the boldness to proclaim—it is a boldness born of spiritual experience, and not of intellectual speculation—that the Purusha is *higher even than the Unmanifest, the Avyakta*:

“High beyond the Intelligence is the Great Self, beyond the Great Self is the Unmanifest, beyond the Unmanifest is the Conscious Being. There is nothing beyond the Being,—that is the extreme ultimate, the supreme goal.” —*Katha*—III. 10, 11

They sing of the Purusha in various contexts:

“I have known this Supreme Purusha, effulgent like the sun, beyond the darkness.”—*Shwetashwatara* III. 8

This is a paean of the highest spiritual triumph—the realisation of the Supreme Person. No song of the human soul, whether it be of the deliverance of Mukti or Kaivalya or Nirvana, or even of its union with the all-pervading and transcendent Immutable, can match in depth and vibrant intensity of revelation this beatific song of the final conquest.

“The Purusha or Paramatman is the supreme Lord, He is the source and cause of being, the Ruler and Master of the purest attainment, the Light imperishable.”—*Shwetashwatara* III.12

“The Purusha is all this that is, what has been and what is yet to be; He is the Master of Immortality and He is whatever grows by food.”—*ibid* III.15

“This shining, immortal Person who is this Truth, and with reference to oneself, this shining immortal Person who exists as a human being—He is just this soul, this Immortal, this Brahman, this All.” —*Brihadāranyaka* II.5.12

The Gita, following in the steps of the Upanishads, calls the Supreme Being¹ Purushottama² and regards Him as the sole object of knowledge and devotion. He is one and He has become all; He is here and He is beyond; He is Light and He is darkness; He is knowledge and He is ignorance; He is life and He is death; He is near and He is far—He is whatever exists and whatever does not yet exist. This reconciliation of all opposites,³ this harmony of all antitheses, anomalies and antinomies, which is so

¹. Cf. En Soph, the infinite divine Being of the Jewish Kabbala.

². अक्षरादपि चोत्तमः—Superior to the Akshara or the Immutable.
Cf. Hegel's identity of Opposites.

baffling to the human mind working by division and differentiation, is the one truth in regard to the Supreme Person which the Upanishads never tire of insisting upon. It is easy to affirm one and deny the other of these opposites, or stigmatise as a blasphemy the paradoxical characterisation of the Purusha as being at once luminous and dark, infinite and infinitesimal, ever-lasting life and all-devouring death. The human mind whose native function is to divide and measure out, analyse and synthesise, is constitutionally incapable of apprehending the infinite oneness of the Supreme. It must go beyond itself, not only in trance, but by a progressive expansion of consciousness, to where nothing exists save the One, the Unique, if it wants to discover and realise the eternal Truth, at once in its static essence and its manifold dynamism. The Vedas and the Upanishads are full of revealing descriptions and indications of this manifoldness, this harmonious fusing of all contraries in the eternal infinity of the One.

“That moves and That moves not; That is far and the same is near; That is within all this and That also is outside all this.”

Ishā Upanishad—6

“Seated He journeys far off, lying down He goes everywhere. Who other than I is fit to know God, even Him who is rapture and the transcendence of rapture?”—*Katha Upanishad* I.2.21

This Being or Purusha envisaged in terms of the Brahman or Atman is declared to be *chatushpāda* or fourfold.

“All this universe is the Eternal Brahman, this Self is the Eternal, and the Self is fourfold.”

As the *Jāgratapāda*, the poise of the outward, the wakefulness, He is *Vaishwānara*, the Universal Male, the enjoyer of gross objects. As the *Swapnapāda*, the poise of the inward, the dreaming, He is *Taijasa*, the Inhabitant in Luminous Mind, the enjoyer of subtle objects. As the *Sushuptipāda*, the poise of the perfect slumber, He is *Prājna*, a massed Consciousness, the Lord of Wis-

dom, the Almighty, the Omniscient, the Womb of the universe, the birth and destruction of creatures. As the *Turiyapāda*, the poise of the ineffable, indeterminate Existence, He is unseen and incommunicable, unseizable, featureless, unthinkable and unnameable. All phenomena cease there in His absolute peace and goodness— शान्तं शिवं अद्वैतम्.

These four aspects or poises taken together, and not separately, constitute the integrality of the Brahman. This integral Brahman is the Param Brahman, the *Paramātmān*, the Parameshwara, the *Parātpara* or the Para Purusha of the Upanishads. He (not It) is the Supreme Being or Person, the sole, indivisible Reality. All creatures are beings of this Being, all things are the self-deploying of this Being, all movements of the universe the action of the self-Force of this one Being. He is relationless and featureless, the fathomless silence and the ineffable Peace, and yet He constitutes and contains in Himself all that have names and forms, all the relativities and diversities of the universal existence. To recognise only His fourth status, the *Turiyapāda*, as true and real, and regard the other three as illusory or insubstantial, is to erect a partial and divisional mental perception into a philosophic truth—a perception which flies in the face of the highest Upanishadic realisations. We do not get a whole man if we lop off his feet, his waist and his chest and retain only his head. The integral Purusha is the *chatushpāda* Purusha, the sole and supreme Conscious Being, the One without a second; and to discover and realise Him integrally, in all the ways and aspects and poises of His being, in all the principles and modes of His self-expression, and not only in His immutable transcendence, is to attain to a perfect self-fulfilment in life. It is to be identified with the integral Reality.

If this is the integral Being, what is the Becoming? What relation has it to the Being?

The later Vedānta, following its one-sided perception, considers all becoming as illusory, *māyic*, and cannot, therefore, relate it to the supreme Reality. The supreme Brahman being, according to it, immobile and immutable, It cannot logically become, It cannot assume name and form, It cannot multiply Itself. It is

eternally silent and passive, entranced in its unmoving peace and beatitude. And if the Akshara does not become, if it does not become Kshara, then what appears to us, deluded mortals; as becoming is nothing but a dream or a hallucination. The Vedanta cannot certainly accept Aristotle's postulate of the "unmoved Mover"; and even if it could, the problem of the becoming would not be solved; for the "unmoved Mover" does not become, but only creates and moves. What, then, is becoming?

The problem resolves itself into two questions, and both are equally important: first, *what is it that becomes?* and, second, *how does it become?* And a third ancillary question also crops up along with the first two with a certain amount of irresistible insistence; and without a satisfactory answer to it, the other two cannot be properly solved: *Why does it become?*

The Veda and the Upanishads are emphatic in their assertion that it is from the Being Himself and not from any other source or cause—for no other exists—that the Becoming proceeds. It is the Being Himself that becomes. Describing the becoming by a self-multiplication and self-diversification of the One, the Purusha, the Rig Veda says:

"Thousand-headed was Purusha, thousand-eyed and thousand-footed. He, having covered the earth on all sides, extended beyond it the length of ten fingers.

"Purusha is all this that has been and that will be. And He is the Lord of immortality, and He is whatever grows by food.

"Such is His greatness, and more than that is Purusha. A fourth of Him is all beings, three-fourths of Him are what is immortal in heaven.

"With three quarters Purusha rose upwards, one quarter of Him here came into being again. Thence He spread asunder in all directions to what eats and does not eat." *Rig Veda X. 90.*

"By the Names of the Lord and Hers they shaped and measured the Force of the Mother of Light; wearing might after might of that Force as a robe the lords of Maya shaped out Form in this Being.

The Masters of Maya shaped all by His Maya; the Fathers who have divine vision set Him within as a child that is to be born."

Rig Veda III.38.7—IX.83.3

Through the cryptic utterances of the ancient seers we can glean illuminating hints of how by the Maya—not the force of illusion, but the conscious, conceptive Power of the Supreme—the Many were brought out of the still, self-concentrated unity of the one Being. What was deployed or manifested was already latent in the Absolute as a possibility, as an "eternal potential", to borrow Whitehead's phrase, as a dormant seed of the future becoming. An endless self-expression of the timeless Being in Time and Space¹ is what we know as the world or the universe—a multiple self-figuration of the featureless Ineffable. All that is manifested is nothing but the Being, the indivisible One self-fashioned into the Many—substance of His Substance, consciousness of His Consciousness, force of His Force, light of His Light, bliss of His Bliss. Matter is that Being, Life is that Being, Mind is that Being, the souls are that Being; all that exists is self-creation of that Being—*sa atmānam akuruta*.

"This Self is the Brahman, He² is Truth-Consciousness, He is Mind, He is Life, He is all eyes, He is all ears, He is the earth, He is waters, He is the wind, He is the ether, He is energy, He is non-energy, He is desire, He is devoid of desire, He is anger, He is pure of anger, He is the all-sustaining Law (dharma), He is without or beyond Law, He is all this that is." *Bṛihadāraṇyaka* IV.4

A straightforward reading of the Vedas and the Upanishads leaves no doubt in our minds about the genesis of this becoming. What can be more definite than the above pronouncements and those that follow?

"This is the eternal Ashwattha tree whose root is above, but its branches are downward. It is He that is called the Bright One

¹ Two are the forms of Brahman, Time and the Timeless"—Maitri Upanishad.

² "स" not "तत्".

and Brahman and Immortality, and in Him are all the worlds established, none goes beyond Him." *Katha* II. 3.1

The roots are above and the branches have spread downwards—this is a vivid image of the world of becoming as a self-extension and self-expression of the Being. Who would have the hardihood to say today that the roots are real, but the branches are unreal, illusory?

"One calm and controlling Spirit within all creatures that makes one form into many fashions: the calm and strong who see Him in their Self as in a mirror, theirs is eternal felicity and it is not for others." *Katha* II.2.12

"Lo, the swan whose dwelling is in the purity, He is the Vasu in the interregions, the Sacrificer at the altar, the Guest in the vessel of the drinking: He is in man and in the Great Ones and His home is in the Law, and His dwelling is in the firmament: He is all that is born of water and all that is born of earth and all that is born on the mountains. He is the Truth and He is the mighty One." *Katha* II. 2. 2

This elaborate description is meant to disarm all doubt about the divine reality and substantiality of the created universe.

"Even as one Fire has entered into the world, but it shapes itself to the forms it meets, so there is one Spirit within all creatures, but it shapes itself to form and form: *it is likewise outside these.*"

—*Katha*—II. 2. 9.

The effective immanence and the overlooking and presiding transcendence of the Being are at once emphasised in the above verse. Becoming is described as the self-shaping of the Being.

"As the spider puts out and gathers in, as herbs spring up upon the earth, as hair of head and body grows from a living man, so here all is born from the Immutable." —*Mundaka*—I. 1. 7.

Identity in substance between the Being and the Becoming is brought into focus in this verse. It would be idle to argue that the spider is real but its web is unreal, or that the head of a man is real but the hair upon it is illusory.

“He, the Divine, the formless Spirit (Purusha), even He is the outward and the inward and He is the Unborn; He is beyond life, beyond mind, luminous, Supreme beyond the Immutable.”

“Life and mind and the senses are born from Him and the sky; and the wind, and light, and the waters and earth upholding all that is.” —*Mundaka*—II. 1. 2 , 3.

“The Deity who is in fire, in water, who has entered into the whole world and abides in it, who is in the herbs, in the trees, to that Deity we bow again and again.” —*Shvetāshwatara*—II. 17.

“This creating Brahman; this ruling Indra; this Prajapati, Father of His peoples; all these Gods and these five elemental substances, even earth, air, ether, water and the shining principles; and these great creatures and those small; and seeds of either sort; and things egg-born and things sweat-born and things born of the womb, and plants that sprout; and horses and cattle and men and elephants; yea, whatsoever thing here breathes and all that moves and everything that has wings and whatso moves not; by Wisdom all these are guided and have their firm abiding in Wisdom. For Wisdom is the eye of the world, Wisdom is the sure foundation, Wisdom is Brahman eternal.” —*Aitareya*—III. 3.

It would be superfluous to quote more passages from the Upanishads. I have culled them at random, and many more such could be culled with both hands to prove that the world is *sadāyatana* and *satpratishtha*, based on the Sat and structured out of the substance of the Sat. It is neither a colossal figment of the cosmic mind, nor a dream, nor a hallucination. The becoming is of the Being, by the Being, and in the Being; there is nothing in it that is not the Being. The infinite Being has become finite-seeming beings and things, and yet He is eternally infinite in Himself. His unity is not abrogated by the phenomenal divisions—अविभक्तञ्च भूतेषु विभक्तमिदं च स्थितम् The Eternal moves here in the flux of Time. The Luminous, ज्योतिषाम् ज्योतिः, has assumed here a mantle of darkness, and lifts the mantle little by little to reveal His boundless glory. It is He everywhere and always, and none but He. Evil, suffering, grief, death, all that appears as contrary to the divine nature of the Being, is also the Being—the contraries are but com-

plementaries, the discords prepare and prelude the final harmony, the negations lead to the eventual affirmation.

We have seen that the omnipresent Reality is the Being, the Purusha, and that it is He who has become all this that we know as the universe, *sarvam khalvidam Brahma*. The vision of the cosmic Purusha, विश्वरूप, shown to Arjuna in the eleventh chapter of the Gita can be taken as a classical illustration of the unity¹ of the Being and the Becoming. It is a symbolical representation of the truth that the Purushottama contains and constitutes the whole universe and is yet transcendent of it. He is in all this that is—*Vāsudevaḥ sarvam*, and yet, He affirms, अहं तेषु (I am not in them). He is not contained and exhausted in them, He exceeds them. अहं इदं कुर्वन् जगत् एकांशेन विष्टम्य स्थितः—I support this entire universe with a single degree of my illimitable power and an infinitesimal portion of my fathomless Spirit. Arjuna sees the supreme Form. “It is that of the infinite Godhead whose faces are everywhere and in whom are all the worlds of existence, who multiplies unendingly all the many marvellous revelations of His Being; a world-wide Divinity seeing with innumerable eyes, speaking with innumerable mouths, armed for battle with numberless divine uplifted weapons, glorious with divine ornaments of beauty, robed in heavenly raiment of Deity, lovely with garlands of divine flowers, fragrant with divine perfumes. Such is the light of the body of God as if a thousand suns had risen at once in heaven. The whole world multitudinously divided and yet unified is visible in the body of the God of Gods....”² And he cries out in awe and wonder as he contemplates the universal Spirit: “I see Thy infinite forms on every side, but I see not Thy end nor Thy middle nor Thy beginning, O Lord of the universe, O Form Universal....Thou art a luminous mass of energy on all sides of me, an encompassing blaze, a sun-bright, fire-bright Immeasurable. Thou art the supreme Immutable whom we have to know, Thou art the high foundation and abode of the universe, Thou art the imperishable guardian of the eternal Law, Thou art the sempiternal soul of existence.”³

¹ Unity, but not commensurability.

² Essays on the Gita by Sri Aurobindo.

³ ibid

There are different descriptions given in the Vedas and the Upanishads of how the One has become many, but they suggest more of the processes that obtain in the world than the initial modifications that take place in the consciousness of the Being on the creative plane of existence. In the Rig Veda we have the following description: "The Brahman was His mouth, of both His arms was the Rajanya made. His thighs became the Vaishya, from His feet the Shudra was produced. The moon was gendered from His mind, and from His eye the sun hath birth; Indra and Agni from His mouth were born, and Vayu from His breath. Forth from His navel came mid-air; the sky was fashioned from His head; Earth from His feet, and from His ear the regions. Thus they formed the worlds." It is true that the Rishis speak of the primacy of the divine Will or Desire as the origin of creation ...*sa aicchata ekoham bahusyām*. This Will wells out of the self-bliss of the Purusha, the Will to enjoy His eternal and invariable Bliss in terms of variety, diversity and multiplicity. But the Will must have brought about certain primary modifications in the unitary consciousness of the One before it could actually create the many. The infinite unity must have created infinite centres of consciousness in itself which make for infinite diversity. This is done on the plane of the Vijnana, which the Mandukya characterises as *vishvasya yoniḥ*, the womb of the universe. Sri Aurobindo calls this Vijnana the Supermind, and describes it thus: "The Supermind...is Being moving out into a determinative self-knowledge which perceives certain truths of itself and wills to realise them in a temporal and spatial extension of its own timeless and spaceless existence. Whatever is in its own being takes form as self-knowledge, as Truth-Consciousness, as Real-Idea, and, that self-knowledge being also self-force, fulfils or realises itself inevitably in Time and Space."¹ The one Being, self-moved by His rapturous Will to manifest, creates innumerable centres of consciousness in Himself and, reposing in His eternal and inalie-

¹ The Life Divine by Sri Aurobindo

Cf. Whitehead's: The "ideal world of conceptual harmonisation is merely a description of God himself. Thus the nature of God is the conceptual realisation of the realm of ideal forms."

nable unity, projects Himself in all these centres and looks at the universe and its objects, which inevitably emerge from Him, from each of these individual poises of His. Thus the one Being, even while remaining one, becomes many beings, many Purushas of the Samkhya, and enjoys His own Nature, Shakti, Prakriti, in different ways. On the supreme creative plane, the *Vijñāna* or the Supermind, the unity is the all-dominating truth, the sovereign experience which nothing can obscure or overlay, and diversity is only a manifold play of that unity. But as the planes descend in the scale, the consciousness of unity recedes more and more into the background, and division, differences, distinctions surge out and spread. They begin to rule the mental and vital consciousness of the beings. And finally when the unity is completely lost, the consciousness of the beings becomes egoistic, confined within the bounds of their fleeting, individual personalities, and cut off from all inner and direct contact with the universal All or the transcendent One. This is the self-imprisonment of the human beings in their own egos, the hegemony of Avidya. When consciousness in its descent has touched the rock bottom of Inconscience and been involved in it, all divisions, all differences are for a time completely obliterated, and nothing exists but the immeasurable Nescience, the nameless, lightless Non-Being, inert and insensible. Then creation starts from this nether end of the ladder. What was involved begins to evolve. Matter emerges from the darkness of Inconscience. Matter is the first evolute, called in the Upanishads *Annam Brahma*, for it too is Brahman. It is not only a dead and inert substance, but the Spirit Itself in the guise of a dead substance. The next to emerge is Life, called *Prāṇa Brahma*. The next is mind, called *Mano Brahma*. The mind is the last term evolved in man up to the present. *Vijñāna* and *Ananda*, the terms and principles respectively of infinite Knowledge and infinite Bliss, are yet to evolve, for they too are involved here; and whatever is involved must sooner or later evolve. Evolution will have accomplished itself when man, awakened and active in the *Vijñāna* and the *Ananda*, will live in the Divine Purusha and fulfil His Will and Purpose upon earth. The Spirit will then stand self-revealed in Its own phenomenal nega-

tion, Matter. The One will tread the earth in myriad human bodies, fully conscious of His dynamic unity in His many self-forms.

The *Vijnāna* or the Supermind is, then, the link between the Being and His Becoming. It is only in the Supermind, the Truth-Consciousness, that the universe can be realised and embraced as the becoming of the Being, and an integral knowledge attained of the dynamic immanence of the Being in Time and Space as well as of His supracosmic transcendence.

The Taittiriya Upanishad gives a graphic picture of the primal Will to the multiple self-representation of the Supreme Being and indicates the rationale and process of the creation from above:

“The Spirit (He) desired of old, ‘I would be manifold for the birth of peoples.’ Therefore He concentrated all Himself in thought, and by the force of His brooding, He created all this universe, yea, all whatsoever exists. Now when He had brought it forth, He entered into that which he had created, He entering in became the Is here and the May Be there; He became that which is defined and that which has no feature; He became this housed thing and that houscless; He became knowledge and He became Ignorance; He became Truth and He became falsehood. Yea, He became all truth, even whatsoever here exists....

“In the beginning all this Universe was Non-Existent and unmanifest, from which this manifest Existence was born. Itself created itself; none other created it. Therefore they say of it the well and beautifully made. Lo, this that is well and beautifully made, verily, it is no other than the delight behind existence. When he has got him this delight, then it is that this creation becomes a thing of bliss; for who could labour to draw in the breath or who could have strength to breathe it out, if there were not that Bliss in the heaven of his heart, the ether within his being? It is He that is the foundation of bliss....”

The becoming, then, is a self-expression of the Being—a multiple, polychrome self-expression, a diverse self-representation

of the One. The boldness of the Rishi of the Taittiriya in declaring that "He became Knowledge and He became Ignorance; He became Truth and He became falsehood...", is the outcome of an unflinching spiritual vision, all-comprehensive and supra-ethical. All possible variations are a logical presupposition of an endless self-expression of the Infinite in finite forms. And when we remember that it is the indivisible One that becomes, and that the apparent many are nothing but the real One, our mind-made differentiations between good and evil and true and false, the deluding counters of our ignorant, divisional perception, lose all their sense and value. What we know as falsehood is not something essentially contrary to Truth, but an obscuration or perversion of Truth—Truth disfigured, whittled down or mangled. What we know as evil is nothing essentially contrary to Good or Goodness—for eternal opposites are unthinkable in the indivisible unity of the One—but a perversion of Good, Good darkened and distorted beyond recognition in the realm of Ignorance. As the scientist tells us that what we call darkness is nothing but an exceedingly low vibration of light, and that light and electricity are all-pervading in the ether of existence, so do the Rishis, the seers, tell us that Truth and Good, Light and Bliss are all-pervading in the universal existence as its sustaining essence, but that their vibrations have become so faint, so muffled here in the surging tide of phenomenal divisions and dualities that they seem to be almost non-existent on the surface. It is only their perversions that abound and dominate the scene.

"States of consciousness there are in which Death is only a change in immortal Life, pain a violent backwash of the waters of the universal delight, limitation a turning of the Infinite upon itself, evil a circling of the good around its perfection..."¹

The problem of evil and suffering which is so often flung in the face of the theistic monist is a problem only for the human

¹ The Life Divine by Sri Aurobindo

mind. When one travels beyond the confines of the human mind, one finds that the problem has faded away into thin air, giving place to a clear perception of the eternal unity of the self-manifesting Being, assuming many poises and passing through many, even contradictory experiences in order to actualise some of the incalculable possibilities of His infinite existence. He is the Player, He is the play, and He is the universal stage on which He plays; and if, in the mounting evolution of the play, the creatures He has created seem to suffer, they are nothing but His self-creation, He Himself in His varied forms, and none but He. It is He who enjoys and He who suffers in His myriad self-representations, and at the same time, in His eternal unitary consciousness He remains untouched by all phenomenal mutations, unaffected by all the evil and suffering of the world. The Self does not die, it does not suffer, it does not change; it is only the forms that change and perish and are born again; and it is only the forms or formations, physical, vital and mental, that rejoice and suffer—the Purusha seated in them, their Lord and Witness, is beyond good and evil, pleasure and pain. He is the immortal eater of the essential honey of existence, मध्वद. All beings are honey to Him—अस्य आत्मनः सर्वाणि भूतानि मधु all beings and things and events overflow with the sweetness of His boundless Bliss. For, if He is the only Existent, the sole Reality, the One without a second, who will accuse Him of cruelty or partiality? The Infinite is pure Delight.

Once we admit the possibility—and what possibility can we logically deny the Infinite?—of the Superconscient Being plunging by a progressive self-limitation into the Inconscient Non-Being, once we accept this involution, this tremendous adventure into the Night, so poetically depicted in the Vedic Hymn of Creation, *Nāsadiya Sukta*, we cannot run away from its inevitable consequences. When evolution starts out of involution, Inconscience does not suddenly change into super-conscience, but there is a long and chequered process of the slow, gradual, laborious release of Consciousness. Subconscience succeeds Inconscience, and through various degrees and densities of its phosphorescent obscurity, clambers up into the half-light of consciousness, which

is all that the human mind possesses today. There are layers upon layers of consciousness above the human, which have to open and operate in man as he evolves. His ethical evaluation of the impacts of life represents only a transitional stage in his evolution. At a higher than the mental stage, he will find himself transcending his narrow ethical norms, and viewing universal existence, not in the limited terms of his separative ego, but in the limitless Truth of the Infinite—the manifold Infinite in the universe, and the unitary Infinite beyond. He will know and experience everything in the light of the Truth of the One. The harassing dualities, the pleasant and painful vicissitudes of life, will then appear to him as indispensable elements of an evolution of consciousness, which, starting out of the congealed gloom of Inconscience, proceeds through a barrage of opposing forces towards its luminous infinity and immortality above. The dead inertia of the Tamas of Inconscience has to be violently shaken and churned by the tempestuous energies of Rajas, and it is this churning that generates evil and suffering and their apparently interminable brood. The ethical sense of evil and suffering is a useful device of Nature for the self-protection of the mental being from the whirlpool of the stormy forces of darkness. It induces a recoil, a defensive self-withdrawal of the evolving consciousness from them, *jugupsā*; and though founded on a very partial and limited view of existence, it serves as a powerful lever of ascent. But when the consciousness rises definitely beyond the mind, its entire perspective undergoes a revolutionary change. It begins then to regard existence, not in small sections and fragments, but as an organic whole, and can clearly perceive the essential, immanental harmony labouring to reveal itself more and more through the dualities and discords of the phenomenal world. No metaphysical problem of existence, be it noted, can be solved by the human mind, for the human mind lives in divisions and distinctions, and has no perception of the indivisible unity of existence; and it is only in the consciousness and experience of the unity of existence that all problems can be luminously solved. It is in the unity of existence that the Being is seen as a unified, manifold Becoming, constituting, permeating and sustaining all, सृष्टिरस्म्यह्मीदं

सर्वमसृक्षीति¹ and yet transcending all, beyond all unity and multiplicity. His transcendence is an indispensable condition of His universal creativity, and that is why the Vedas and the Upanishads always underline it—अत्यतिष्ठदशङ्गुलम् (extended beyond it the length of ten fingers.), as the Rig Veda says, or रूपं रूपं प्रतिष्ठापोदहिश्च (It shapes itself to form and form, it is likewise outside these), as the Katha Upanishad affirms.

The last point that remains now to consider is this: why does the Being, lacking nothing, desiring nothing, at all become? Why does He at all create or manifest? The only answer that the Upanishads give to it is that it is for sheer delight that the Being becomes, for the joy of various self-expression, the joy of multiple self-reproduction, the joy of self-objectification.

“From Bliss alone, it appears, are the creatures born, and being born they live by Bliss, and to Bliss they go hence and return.”

—*Taittiriya*

Once the truth of existential unity is firmly grasped and possessed in experience, it will be easy for the human consciousness to thrill to the multifarious delight that is the inexhaustible womb and sustenance of the universal life.

“He in whom it is the Self-Being that has become all existences that are Becomings, for he has the perfect knowledge, how shall he be deluded, whence shall he have grief *who sees everywhere oneness?*”

—*Ishā*

“We have started with the assertion of all existence as one Being whose essential nature is Consciousness, one Consciousness whose active nature is Force or Will; and this Being is Delight, this Consciousness is Delight, this Force or Will is Delight.”²

¹ *Bṛihadāranyaka* .

² *The Life Divine* by Sri Aurobindo

But this Will to delight is not a mere freak or an aimless drift of creative energy; it has an ever-developing design, a progressive purpose or end in view which it works out in Time and Space. It is a creative Will to an infinite variation of its invāriable essence. "The existence which manifests itself in them (the worlds) is Conscious Being and a perfect emergence of its potentialities in form is the sole object which we can rationally conceive for its manifestation of this world of forms."¹ "Since...the eternal and immutable delight of being moving out into infinite and variable delight of becoming is the root of the whole matter, we have to conceive one indivisible conscious Being behind all our experiences supporting them by its inalienable delight and effecting by its movement the variations of pleasure, pain and mental indifference in our sensational existence."² That is why His name is Delight— तद्धनं नाम.

The integral philosophy must, therefore, unify the two fundamental facts of pure existence and world-existence: the Being and the Becoming. "To deny one or the other is easy; to recognise the facts of consciousness and find out their relation is the true and fruitful wisdom."³ In ancient Indian philosophies of the Vedic and Upanishadic times, there was such an integrated view of existence. The world was never regarded as distinct from its Creator and Continent—ब्रह्मैवेदं विश्वमिदं वग्निष्ठम् (all this is Brahman alone, all this magnificent universe) and earthly life was joyfully accepted as a field—the only field—for the liberation, perfection and fulfilment of the embodied human soul. It was never spurned as a lie or dreaded as a snare or a nightmare.

“अमृतस्य देव धारणो भूयासम् —O God, may I become a vessel of immortality. May my body be swift to all works, may my tongue drop pure honey.”

—*Taittiriya Upanishad*

¹ The Life Divine by Sri Aurobindo

² *ibid*

ibid

But in the post-Upanishadic philosophies, on account of a gradual contraction of the spiritual vision and a dwindling of the spiritual vitality of the race, the ancient comprehensiveness was lost. The *chatushpāda* Brahman was relieved of His three *pādas* and made to stand upon only one, the Turiya. And the natural result of this reduction of the integrality of the Purusha to the supracosmic Absolute was an impatient drive towards some kind of self-immersion or self-extinction in its static absoluteness through a resolute rejection, summary or gradual, of life and its activities. Being was sundered from His Becoming.

In Western philosophy there has hardly ever been any satisfying unification of the Being and the Becoming, though among the Western mystics an exceptional few have had some perception of it. Parmenides regards the Being as the only Reality, and It is changeless and immutable. Change or movement he considers as only an appearance, almost an illusion. Bradley's views run more or less on the same lines. For them there is no real becoming of the Being. Plato's conception of God corresponds to a certain extent to the conception of Being who is, unlike the Being of the Eleatic school, a dynamic agent in the manifestation of Forms or Ideas in the flux of the universe. But the becoming is never shown to be a self-expression or self-representation of the Being Himself—the gulfs between God, Forms and the flux are never bridged. Though Parmenides and Heraclitus are joined in Plato's philosophy, the union is not a happy one; some disparate elements in Plato's insight and outlook create and keep up a sort of estrangement between the two. In *Phaedo* he says, "When the soul uses the body as an instrument of perception, that is to say, when it uses the sense of sight or hearing or some other sense, she is dragged by the body into the region of the changeable, and wanders and is confused; the world spins round her, and she is like a drunkard, when she touches change. But when she contemplates in herself and by herself, then she passes into the other world, the region of purity and eternity and immortality and unchangeableness, which are her kindred, and with them she ever lives, when she is by herself and is not let or hindered; then she ceases from her erring ways, and being in communion with the unchanging is

unchanging. And this state of the soul is called wisdom." But in the Republic he speaks like an ardent humanist "And if the world perceives that what we are saying about him is the truth will they be angry with philosophy? Will they disbelieve us, when we tell them that *no State can be happy which is not designed by artists who imitate the heavenly pattern?*¹

They will not be angry if they understand, he said. But how will they draw out the plan of which you are speaking?

They will begin by taking the State and the manners of men, from which, as from a tablet, they will rub out the picture, and leave a clean surface. This is no easy task. But whether easy or not, herein will lie the difference between them and every other legislator,—they will have nothing to do either with individuals or State, and will inscribe no laws, until they have either found, or themselves made, a clean surface.

They will be very right, he said.

Having effected this, they will proceed to trace an outline of the constitution?

No doubt.

And when they are filling in the work, as I conceive, they will often turn their eyes upwards and downwards: I mean that they will first look at absolute justice and beauty and temperance, and again at the human copy; and will mingle and temper the various elements of life into the image of a man; and thus they will conceive according to that other image, which, when existing among men, Homer calls the form and likeness of God.

Very truly, he said.

And one feature they will erase, and another they will put in, *until they have made the ways of men, as far as possible, agreeable to the ways of God?*²

Plato could not resolve this conflict within himself between his other-worldly spiritual bias and his Greek humanism, though there is, in his theory of "Forms" or "Ideas", an implicit germ of teleology which, united to the theory of evolution, might have resolved the conflict and given birth to a global system of meta-

¹ Italics are mine

² Italics are mine

physics, provided he could see his way to make his "Ideas" dependent upon God. Ideas inhere or occur in consciousness, they do not rise out of a void. God, being an infinite consciousness or a conscious Being, must, therefore, be regarded as the matrix of Ideas, even of the Idea of Good, and independent of them. Plato's theory of Ideas is a great discovery and landmark in Western philosophy, but it is linked neither to the infinite, timeless Being above, nor to the infinite, temporal Becoming below.

Spinoza's "Substance" or God, like Hegel's "Absolute Spirit", is an essential, immanent Reality, infinite in the infinity of Time and Space, but without any station or poise transcendent of the universe. It cannot, therefore, be equated with the Vedic and Upanishadic "Being." The Vedas and the Upanishads do not countenance any kind of pantheism, though they are often ignorantly taxed with it. Heraclitus and Bergson regard the world as a ceaseless flux in which they perceive no stable and changeless reality anywhere. Bergson calls this flux becoming,¹ but a becoming without a Being prior to it, without that which becomes, is nothing short of an abstraction. What becomes?

The emergent evolutionists seem to have stumbled upon some important elements of an integral philosophy, but they labour under the same limitation as besets most schools of Western philosophy, the (for them) insuperable limitation of Time and Space, an inability to soar above the spacio-temporal circumscription. Alexander's infinite "deity" does not (yet) exist, and his God "is the whole universe engaged in process towards the emergence of this new quality,"² which he terms "deity". According to him, the "God of the religious consciousness is an actual infinite, the whole universe, with a *nisus* to deity"³, who is in the making. There is no transcendence for his God and no fulness or completeness for his "deity".

Whitehead takes a notable step forward by supplementing Alexander's "*nisus*" or upward *élan* by his theory of "ingression"

¹ "An infinite multiplicity of becomings variously coloured, so to speak, pass before our eyes."—Creative Evolution by Bergson.

² Space, Time and Deity by Alexander

³ *ibid*

or penetration from above and restoring to living thought Plato's "Forms" or "Ideas". But for the difficulty and obscurity of his language, he would have been hailed as the most original and profound philosopher of the modern times, and one of the greatest ever born in Europe. His is a remarkably synthetic approach to philosophy, and his contribution to modern thought has not yet been fully gauged. His God is, unlike Alexander's and Lloyd Morgan's, the transcendent source and sustenance of the universe, and yet He is also immanent in it. Whitehead's conception of two Gods, primordial and consequent, need not appear so baffling, as some philosophers are inclined to think. If we substitute the word "Supermind" for both his Gods, we shall have, what Sri Aurobindo terms, the timeless and spaceless Supermind above, the Creator of the universe, and the Supermind that evolves in Time and Space out of the abyss of the Inconscience below. Both are the same God under two polar aspects: one is eternal or primordial, and the other is consequent or evolutionary. Whitehead has incorporated into his synthetic philosophy the ideas of evolution and teleology, and making "Creativity" the "Ultimate principle", and the "eternal objects" (they can be taken as more or less the same as Plato's Forms or Ideas¹) the "pure potentials" of the universe, comes very near to reconciling Being and Becoming in a wide sweep of reflective thought.² But his God is not the Being of the Upanishads, in as much as He is presented as a "primordial, non-temporal *accident of Creativity*." The obsession of the Western mind with activity, dynamism, movement is another besetting limitation to its philosophic thought, and its confinement within Time and Space is perhaps a consequence or concomitant of this crippling obsession. Whitehead's God is almost a creature of His Creativity and lacks the Vedantic Being's eternal peace and silence from which, as from a perennial inexhaustible fount, the stream of creation flows out for ever. His becoming is not also the same as envisaged by the early Vedanta—it is not a real or substantial

¹ Whitehead has improved upon Plato's theory by making the Ideas or what he calls "eternal objects" inhere and occur in God as "conceptual feelings."

² For a detailed assessment and criticism of Whitehead's philosophy, refer to Dr. S.K. Maitra's admirable book "The Meeting of the East and West in Sri Aurobindo's Philosophy"

becoming of the Being, but an abstraction of a flux wanting the solidity of a substance; for Whitehead fights shy of accepting any substance as the substratum of universal existence. However that may be, Whitehead's is one of the most impressive attempts to construct a synthetic philosophy of Being and Becoming ever made in the West.

Among the Existentialists, Louis Lavelle has made an attempt at a synthetic philosophy by reverting to the Platonic "Ideas" and bridging the gulf between Being and Becoming, Essence and Existence, by his theory of "participation." But his attempt too is vitiated by the same fatal obsession with act or action. His Being is a "pure act", the Being's consciousness is an act, and the ideal of the human being is to express his essence in his existence by a perfect participation in the pure act of God or in the essence of God which is pure act. This exclusive emphasis on act or creativity may be a corrective to the quietistic tendency of the human mind, more generally pronounced in the East than in the West, but it ignores the transcendence of the Being to all working of His own Force—the fathomless stillness and silence of His absolute status, His superiority to His own becoming. To equate consciousness with act is like equating the sea with its waves and surges.

If, then, we accept the truth proclaimed by the Upanishads that the Being, the Atman, is honey to all His becomings, *ayamātmā sarveshām bhūtānām madhu*, we are perfectly justified in holding that it is towards this Self, this supreme blissful Being, that all becoming is irresistibly moving in various ways through the dualities of manifested existence. He is the eternal Flute-Player who attracts¹ with His honeyed strains the hearts of all His creatures, and He is the timeless Ashwattha tree whose roots are above, but whose trunk and branches have spread downwards for the splendour of a divine blossoming in Time.

What is the destiny of the human being in the universal becoming of which he is an indivisible part? It is nothing short of a union and identification with the Supreme Being in all possible

¹ Cf. Whitehead's "lures"

ways. There are three poises of the Being: the supracosmic existence, the cosmic Spirit, and the individual Self in the many. The human being has to unite with the Supreme Being in all these three poises. To recover and realise the one Being in all this multitudinous becoming, to unite with Him in his infinite delight in creation, to fulfil His Will in the steps of His creative Truth, to transform all himself into His image and express Him and Him alone in thought and feeling, will and action, in every movement of his nature, as well as to live in His ineffable immutable transcendence and absolute, unconditioned Bliss, is the one object of man's life on earth. To turn his soul and his whole existence into manifest Being is the end of his terrestrial becoming. A perfect revelation of the Being is the crowning fulfilment of the Becoming, and it is the Rita-chit or the Supermind that holds the key to this supreme fulfilment.

RISHABHCHAND

The Course of History

SRI AUROBINDO writes in *The Ideal of Human Unity*: “Nothing is more obscure to humanity or less seized by its understanding, whether in the power that moves it or the sense of the aim towards which it moves than its own communal and collective life. Sociology does not help us, for it only gives us the general story of the past and the external conditions under which communities have survived. History teaches us nothing; it is a confused torrent of events and personalities or a kaleidoscope of changing institutions. We do not seize the real sense of all this change and this continual streaming forward of human life in the channels of Time.” To look for the true sense and drift of the world-historic movements is to stand face to face with the riddle of the universe and it will either plunge us into the serbonian bogs or bring us to the very heart of the supreme idea that is unfolding itself behind all the complexities of life, and enable us to peer through the corridors of time and have some glimpses of the divine event. The first question is the nature of the ‘power that moves’ man’s collective life for it can be said with some justification that world-history is human history. If that power is a mechanical material energy blindly creating and destroying then as Sir James Jeans said the outlook is rather depressing for after long aeons of time man and his planet might both may be defunct and the whole episode may be a drama that came to an end in the twinkling of an eye without leaving a single rat or brat to tell the tale of this sudden evanescence, and it would be futile to hitch our wagon to a star. If, on the other hand, there are signs of a conscious force at work then a search into the meaning and drift of events and the aim of the march of the civilisation promises to be a most fruitful study.

The age grows ripe for such tentative attempts; for today the

historian has before him a vast and prodigious mass of data of all sorts which call for not only a scrupulous scientific scrutiny but creative imagination and intuitive vision which in a sweep seizes the Real Idea that is manifesting itself in this irreversible streaming forward of life. The enormity of the material can be estimated from these words of the great historian Toynbee: "In our day the Minoan civilization has risen from its grave below the Graeco-Roman civilization; the Shang culture in China from below the classical China; the Indus Culture from below Aryan India; the Hittite civilization from below the Asia Minor known to Herodotus; and at the same time our picture of the Sumerian and Egyptian civilizations, and of the pre-Columbian civilization in the New World, has been quite transformed by the new knowledge that the excavator's spade has brought to light here too." The historian can no longer content himself with giving us a chronological order of the sequence of events; he must take a panoramic view of the whole field and out of this mazy tangle bring to light the nature of the hidden forces that governed the course of history; he must discover a meaning by interpreting the physiognomy, as Spengler would say, of the super-being that each culture has been. It is interesting how the new approach to history had to strike out tentatively, diffidently until Toynbee and Spengler swept the field off and each blazed a trail that illumined the path. Even a historian who considered himself a champion of the spirit of synthesis, as opposed to the monographic approach cried out in protest when the first volumes of Toynbee's history appeared: "Is it licit, good method and correct procedure to institute a series of valid and fruitful comparisons amongst twenty-one civilizations, extending from one end of the chain of time to the other distributed over the entire circumference of the globe?" But as Roger Caillous observes, "In this instance prudence is no less paralysing than boldness is perilous." And if the first attempts are full of inaccuracies, snap judgments and rash generalizations then further efforts should be made to probe deeper so that the results and conclusions are revised, corrected and even superseded by fresh revelations. Three historical philosophers stand out, and strangely enough their chronological order suggests

a deep truth about the evolution of human consciousness. Karl Marx gives a materialistic interpretation of history and sees everywhere man struggling for his means of subsistence. The second colossal attempt was made by a giant Teuton, Oswald Spengler, a proud German following on the heels of Goethe and Nietzsche. He abandons both the causal point of view and the teleological standpoint and steers a middle course in seeing the whole cultural drama as the rhythm of the life-force—birth, childhood, youth, old age and death. There is no question of any goal set for human life; for, each culture sprouts unpredictably out of a soil and like a tree it has only one choice either to grow according to its seed and fulfil its destined form or not to grow at all and perish like a plant that has no roots in its soil. This is the vitalistic interpretation of history and it has a powerful truth behind it; for, the life principle expresses the rhythm of the cosmic force that is the creatrix of the universe. Spengler ends by seeing Man as a beast of prey which is the highest form of mobile life for him and human history as a relentless struggle of the Nietzschean will-to-power—‘a no quarter battle’ as he terms it. Bergson, too, has an analogous intuition but he does not stop short at the carnivorous life; he has higher visions. In his *Les Deux Sources de la Morale et de la Religion* he distinguishes between two radically different kinds of society: natural and supernatural. Natural society is instinctual, compulsive, all enveloping, rooted in a tribal morality based on preserving the social species. Supernatural society operates through the vision of great individuals, with a mystic penetration to the sources of life; its exponents stand in opposition to natural society, seeking to overcome its fixations by supplanting the social with the personal, the will-to-survive with the will-to-transcend. This interaction and interpenetration of the two elements—the creative individual and the conservative mass of mankind—has been dealt with by Nolini Kanta Gupta with the global vision of a spiritual seer and throws an authentic light on one of the most fundamental problems of human life. But of this hereafter.

We come now to the great work of Toynbee *A Study of History*. Here the methodology pursued is not phsysiognomic but

scientific based on comparisons of different life-lines followed by 21 cultures of the past. The author sees certain uniformities in the curves traced by these twenty-one cultures and on the basis of that deduces certain laws. It must be owned that when he set to write his *Study* he was predisposed to prove or rather to shew how the course of the history everywhere bears out the truth of the Christian religion; but in the course of writing the later volumes he discovered that Islam and Hinduism have also to be given a prominent place in this interpretation. Before we proceed further we must appraise in its major bearings the contribution made by this great historian of our times. The first thing established by him is a pluralism, a diversity which puts an end to the Hegelian idea of a development of linear history. It is a many-sided perfection and synthesis that is aimed at by nature in her terrestrial evolution and therefore each culture presents a facet of Reality and not the whole of it. Toynbee, because of the limitation of the Scientific method, gives us a logic of history that is horizontal or transversal but it leaves out of account the idea of a vertical, unique, regulated, necessarily impeccable unfolding of events, without freedom or gratuitousness, without error or useless repetition. He says at one place, "The real question at issue is not whether mental patterns exist but whether they cover the whole field of human affairs or only part of it; and my own belief is that there are some things in human affairs that have no patterns because they are not subject to scientific laws." Regarding that part of the universe or human life which escapes all mind-forged patterns we will repeat only what Sri Aurobindo wrote in the *Life Divine*:

"The only argument against a conscious and intelligent source for this purposeful work, this work of intelligence, of selection, adaptation and seeking is that large element in Nature's operations to which we give the name of waste. But obviously this is an objection based on the limitations of our human intellect which seeks to impose its own particular rationality, good enough for limited human ends, on the general operations of the World-Force. We see only part of Nature's purpose and all that does not subserve that part we call waste. Yet even our own human

action is full of an apparent waste, so appearing from the individual point of view, which yet, we may be sure, subserves well enough the large and universal purpose of things. That part of her intention which we can detect, Nature gets done surely enough in spite of, perhaps really by virtue of her apparent waste. We may well trust to her in the rest which we do not yet detect."

Secondly his approach bypasses that sudden outburst of new lights which from time to time coruscate on our spiritual firmaments and which defy all human calculations and formulae. Lewis Mumford rightly levels this criticism against Toynbee: "By defining society as an external relationship, he deprives the concept, at the outset, of cultural or spiritual values and is therefore driven to describe social transaction in figures derived naively from the physical sciences. In fact, his treatment of civilisation remains a barren one outside the realm of geo-politics, as his picture of the spiritual life is largely empty except for the part represented by organized religion. Within these vast realms like an eighteenth century thinker—he finds only individual atoms, either oppressed by a Leviathan State or seeking solitary refuge in God." Thus Toynbee belittles the new elements that each society brings into being. But the realm of the spirit as LLOYD Morgan says is the realm of the non-repetitive, the unique, the emergent. Toynbee in his third volume defines growth, as the "progressive and cumulative mastery over an external environment, physical or human." This accounts for only man's external progress as a social being but fails to see that behind this victory there is another movement however veiled i.e. the growth of consciousness. Not that Toynbee is oblivious of the spiritual and psychic growth of man but that he stops short of that spiritual vision which is cosmic in its purview and sees the transcendent Reality beyond the individual and the universe the two whom Toynbee calls the microcosm and the macrocosm. He sees two forces at play but cannot reconcile them. For him outer growth is usually at the expense of the inner growth, and whereas outer growth takes place in the Macrocosm, i.e. in society, inner growth takes place in the microcosm i.e. the individual soul. In the microcosm a "progressive and cumulative self-articulation is the

sign of a successful response.” (3rd volume, p. 128) In this second development what he calls ‘etherialization’ takes place, that is to say, the individual grows into a higher plane of consciousness and there is a transvaluation of values. He is no longer environment-conditioned but organism-determined. The old criteria of success are discarded and success is no longer measured in terms of the heaping of material gains but in terms of inner victories. Such criteria of success as power, expansion, control over the physical environment yield place to qualitative criteria as meaning, values, concentration on spiritual development. Hence the inner growth for him must inevitably be at the cost of the outer growth. For Toynbee the ultimate meaning and value of existence become visible only through the miscarriage of civilization. It is when man discovers that all outer pursuits lead him to misery, frustration and ultimate perdition that he becomes ready for God. In his view saviours like Buddha, Jesus and Mohammed perform the last act in the development of a culture: they made the whole previous scheme of things meaningless, except as preparation to the Other World. Hence all social disasters are spiritual opportunities and as a critic says: ‘As the prospects for civilization darken, the number of such opportunities correspondingly multiplies: the worse for society and This World the better for religion and the Other World. Neither life nor the daily transactions of life have any meaning as a preparation for eternity.’ But in the ninth volume he treats the possibility of an ecumenical religious transformation as a co-ordinate act in bringing about a world-state. This is a contradiction Toynbee nowhere fully resolves. “The soldier serving in the Church Militat”, he says, “knows that This World is a spiritual battlefield that is not his spiritual home.” (VII, 561) Lewis Mumford sums up his criticism of the *Study of History* in these profound words:

“He has not allowed for the fact that it is in the non-repetitive processes which lie beyond the scope of comparative inquiry—in the unique instances, the singular moments, the creative departures, in all that is non-repeatable and has perhaps escaped witness or record—that the full meaning of human history, in

its departures from predictable sequences and natural uniformities, is to be found. Because for him the spiritual life cannot fully flourish until all the outlets of worldly life are closed, the mission of history is to bring about sufficient disintegration to cause despair of finding fulfilment in history."

Sri Nolini Kanta Gupta makes an original contribution here.¹ He does not dwell on the common denominator but by entering into the spiritual core of each culture disentangles that element which makes it a note unique and indispensable in the symphony that is the concourse of history. It is interesting to read how the views of Nolini Kanta coincide with those of Lewis Mumford. About the Greeks he says in the book under review, "The appearance of the Greeks on the stage of human civilisation is a mystery to historians. They are so different from all that preceded them. There does not seem to exist any logical link between them and the races from whom they are supposed to have descended or whose successors they were.... There is a breath in the Ionian atmosphere, a breath of ozone, as it were, which wafts down to us, even into the air of today." And then he says: "All crises in evolution are a sudden revelation, an unexpected outburst, a *saltum*, a leap into the unknown." What is their unique contribution? "The Greek Mind...is the bridge thrown across the gulf existing between the spiritual, the occult, the intuitive and the sensuous, the physical, the material. Since the arrival of the Hellenes a highway has been built up, a metalled macadamised road connecting these two levels of human experience and there is possible now a free and open communication from the one to the other." And what is the role of this Mind of Reason? "There are deeper and higher sources in man", he says, "more direct, immediate and revealing, where things have their birth and origin; but this one is necessary for the embodiment, for the building up and maintenance of the subtler and profounder truths in an earthly structure, establish and fix them in the normal consciousness." It "is a kind of steel-frame for other movements of consciousness—pure ideas, imaginations or in-

¹ *The March of Civilisation* Pub. Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry.

instinctive and sensory notions, or even secret intimations and visions of deeper truths and greater realities—to take body, to find a local habitation and name and be firmly stabilised for experience or utilisation in physical life.”

About collective growth into light that we witness periodically he says, “There is a tide not only in the affairs of men, but of peoples also: and masses, large collectivities live on the crest of their consciousness, feeling and thinking deeply and nobly, acting and creating powerfully, with breadth of vision and intensity of aspiration, spreading all around something that is new and not too common, a happy guest come from somewhere.”

His remarks about the role of the creative individual and group elevation throw a revealing light on the problem. “...when it is a new truth that has to be disclosed and set in man’s heart and consciousness, then the individual is called up and undertakes the work: when, however, the truth already somehow found or near at hand is to be spread wide and made familiar to men and established upon earth, then the larger anonymous movements are born and have sway.” He discusses many of the great movements that stirred humanity and spurred it to strike into new fields. Renaissance, for instance, “was really a new Illumination: a flood of light poured upon the mind and intellect and understanding of the period. There was a brightness, a brilliance, a happy agility and keenness in the movements of the brain. A largeness of vision, a curious sensibility, a wide and alert consciousness:” The Romantic Revival was a reception of light in the heart and imagination. The movement that brought modern India to independence is an evocation of both Light and Power. “For it meant nothing less than the spiritual awakening of India and therefore the spiritual regeneration of the whole world: it is the harbinger of the new epoch in human civilisation.” In his global view each spiritual movement also finds its pride of place. “Christ brought a leaven into the normal manifest mode of consciousness, an other-worldly life. He established a living and dynamic contact with the soul, the inner person in man, the person that is behind but still rules the external personality made of mind and life and body consciousness....The episode links up with the inner story of man-

kind, its spiritual history. The growing or evolving consciousness of man was not only an outgoing and widening movement: it was also a heightening, an ascent into ranges that are not normally perceived, towards summits of true reality." He sums up his first essay with these words: "Man progresses through cycles of crest movements. They mark an ever-widening circle of the descent of Light, the growth of consciousness. Thus there is at first a small circle of élite, a few chosen people at the top, then gradually the limited aristocracy is widened out into a larger and larger democracy."

The book has nine chapters all replete with the light of a vision of the truth of man's ultimate destiny individually and collectively. The other chapters are:—The Eternal East and West, A Global Humanity, The Immortal Nation, Evolution of the Spiritual Consciousness, Matter Aspires, An Evolutionary Problem and the last Values Higher and Lower. The thesis of the author is that the modern age is the confluence of the many streams of different cultures and holds the promise of the richest life of humanity finding its culmination in the dawning of a spiritual age. It gives the quintessence of each culture, the light that shone over its peak moments as well as the spiritual leaven that with each religious personality permeated in the tardy march of humanity. We hope, that like its predecessors in the field, it will influence that élite of humanity which is looking for the pattern behind this tangled skein; what Sri Aurobindo calls the Real Idea or the Truth-Consciousness.

R. N. KHANNA

Nirukta and the Veda

YASKA'S Nirukta consists of two parts (1) Nighantu and (2) Nirukta. I have not been able to study the text of the Nirukta critically enough to—that being outside the scope of my study—form my own opinion on it. For those who are interested in the date, authenticity etc., should refer to Dr. Skold's and Dr. Laxman Sarup's works on the Nirukta.

TEXT AND DATE

According to Dr. Skold and Dr. Laxman Sarup “the Nirukta is not homogeneous.” Dr. Sarup believes in “three stages of interpolations in the Nirukta text.”

The date of Yaska is unknown and unfortunately there is no possibility of fixing his date.

Tradition places Yaska at 1000 B.C. Yaska may be prior to the Brahmanas. The only positive evidence we have helps us to fix the lower limit of Yaska's time. For instance

I. Panini पाणिनि speaks of Yaska.

II Yaska himself speaks of Niruktakars before him.

III Nirukta text was known to Patanjali.

But it is doubtful whether the Nirukta text known to these ancients was the same that has come down to us. According to Dr. Sarup the date of Durgacharya, the commentator on Yaska, is 1387 A.D.

THE NIGHANTU

More important still, and yet more difficult to solve, is the question about the authorship of the Nighantu. Dr. Skold thinks that it was compiled before Yaska. All tradition shares his belief.

It is assumed that Yaska received the Nighantu as we know it from his predecessors. But still the question whether it is the work of one man or of many men remains unsolved. "There are words in the Nighantu which are not used in the Rig-veda"—(Skold). Dr. Sarup says—"Nighantu is probably not a production of a single individual, but the result of united efforts of a whole generation or perhaps of several generations."

These conclusions almost compel us to draw other inferences. Before the text be considered we may simply state that Nighantu may possibly be an effort at preserving the earliest effort at interpretation of the Rig-Veda. Though we may admit that to the modern mind it is clumsy and is encrusted over with many accretions. In fact the large number of syllables classed as—"unknown"—proves that the significance of the Vedic Riks was already being forgotten. As Nighantu contains 33 words (Dr. Skold) not traceable to the Rig-Veda, we are therefore tempted to conclude that when Nighantu was compiled there were more hymns (Riks) than what we know as the Rig-Veda. This supports Sri Aurobindo's inference that the collection (*Samhitā*) known to us as Rig-Veda may have come into existence at the close of a great period of intuitive knowledge or it may have been a selection from a larger number of Riks current in pre-Vedic times.

The following general observations can be safely made in the light of the available evidence:

That

- (I) The Brahmanas seem to be the first effort at preserving the Vedic lore as distinct from the Riks.
- (II) The meaning of the Riks had already begun to be obscured even to the compilers of the Brahmanas.
- (III) Yaska's Nirukta seems to be the first effort after the Brahmanas at interpreting the Veda. Its basis is grammar and it tries to indicate the origin of Vedic words. Mainly with the help of tradition it interpretes the Riks.
- (IV) The significance of many words had become unknown when Yaska wrote the Nirukta—this is conceded by Yaska himself.

- (V) Yaska wrote the Nirukta before the famous grammar of Panini and the Maha Bhashya of Patanjali. One thousand years B.C. is the date assigned to Yaska by tradition.
- (VI) Apart from Yaska there were many other individuals who were looked upon as great authorities on Vedic interpretations. Among them may be mentioned Shak-tayana, Gallava, Udumber, Tittiki, Garga, Shakpuni, Sthulastivi referred to by Yaska. Besides these there were current in Yaska's time various schools of Vedic interpretation such as the Aitihasic—the Historical; the Naiyayika—that of the logicians, the Niruktas etc.¹
- (VII) All these facts go to show that the meaning of the ancient text had already begun to grow dim and it is to the Nirukta that we owe even the fragmentary preservation of the interpretation that was current in Yaska's times. It is probable that in the times which followed the spread of the Upanishads the formal ritualism which seems to have been the accepted meaning of the Veda, came to be disregarded as inferior to the newly rising spirituality of the Vedanta. It must have then become the special subject of the Purohitis, the Upadhyayas and the Agnihotris while the general mass of the people attracted by the popular language (Pali) went over to it.

NIGHANTU

Nighantu is divided into five chapters, the first three containing various parts of speech such as nouns, adjectives, verbs,

¹ Deva Raja Yajwan was a commentator on the Rig-Veda prior to Sayana. This Deva Raja speaks of Madhava, son of Venkata. Madhava refers to Skandaswamin who seems to be earlier than the 12th Century. He worked with Udgitha and Narayana.

माधवः न शक्योऽनृषिभिर्वक्तुमृग्यं इति निश्चयः ।
 यद्वेदाः शक्यन्ते ज्ञातुं तदुवाचात्र शौनकः ॥
 स्कंदस्वामी नारायणः उद्गीथ इति ते क्रमात् ।
 चक्रुः सहैकमृगभाष्यं परवाक्यार्थगोचरम् ॥

suffixes, etc. while the last two chapters group together words of uncertain significances. Thus, Prithivi—"Earth" has 21 synonyms; Karma—"Action" 26 and the adjective "Mahat" "much" or "many" or "great" is indicated by 12 words.

We have in Chapter	I	—	414 words.
	II	—	595 "
	III	—	389 "

Altogether they denote 17, 22 and 30 significances respectively. A total of 1,398 words denotes 69 objects of understanding.

Chapter	IV	—	278 words.
	V	—	148 "

It may be interesting to note here that there are 101 names for "Water" and 122 verbs indicating "Movement".

1. Several words in it denote more than one object, i.e. convey more than one meaning.

Thus:

1. अदिति	<i>Aditi</i>	1. गो	<i>go</i>	cow.
		2. पृथिवी	<i>pr̥thivī</i>	earth.
		3. वाक्	<i>vāk</i>	speech.
2. इळा	<i>Ilā</i>	1. गो	<i>go</i>	cow.
		2. अन्नम्	<i>annam</i>	food.
		3. वाक्	<i>vāk</i>	speech.
3. ऋतम्	<i>ṛtam</i>	1. सत्यम्	<i>satyam</i>	truth.
		2. उदकम्	<i>udakam</i>	water.
		3. यज्ञ	<i>yajña</i>	sacrifice.
		4. प्रजनन	<i>prajanana</i>	procreation.
4. गो	<i>Gau</i>	1. पृथिवी	<i>pr̥thivī</i>	earth.
		2. रश्मि	<i>raśmi</i>	ray.
		3. वाक्	<i>vāk</i>	speech.
		4. सूर्यरश्मि	<i>sūrya- raśmi</i>	rays of the sun.
		5. स्तोत्र	<i>stotra</i>	hymn of pra- ise.
		6. अन्नम्	<i>annam</i>	food.
		7. गो	<i>go</i>	cow.

		8. आदित्य	<i>āditya</i>	sun.
		9. चर्म	<i>carma</i>	leather.
		10. श्लेष्म	<i>śleṣma</i>	secretion.
		11. ज्या	<i>jyā</i>	bowstring.
5. चन्द्र	<i>Candra</i>	1. हिरण्य	<i>hiranya</i>	gold.
		कान्ति	<i>kānti</i>	to appear beautiful (or to shine).
6. जलाशयम्	<i>Jalāṣam</i>	1. उदकम्	<i>udakam</i>	water.
		2. सुखम्	<i>sukham</i>	happiness.
7. जूर्णि	<i>Jūrṇi</i>	1. क्रोध	<i>krodha</i>	anger.
		2. क्षिप्रम्	<i>kṣipram</i>	quick (Dr. Sarup)
8. दीधितयः	<i>Dīdhitayaḥ</i>	1. अङ्गुलयः	<i>angulayaḥ</i>	fingers.
		2. रश्मि	<i>raśmi</i>	rays.
		धा	<i>dhā</i>	to place, put, hold.
9. द्रविणम्	<i>Draviṇam</i>	1. धनम्	<i>dhanam</i>	wealth moveable property (Dr. Skold)
		2. बलम्	<i>balam</i>	strength.
10. धी	<i>Dhī</i>	1. कर्म	<i>karma</i>	action; devo- tion (Dr. Sarup)
		2. प्रज्ञा	<i>Prajñā</i>	understand- ing; Thought (Dr. Sarup).
		धा	<i>dhā</i>	=to hold, place.
11. नृम्णम्	<i>Nṛmṇam</i>	1. बलम्	<i>balam</i>	strength.
		धनम्	<i>dhanam</i>	wealth.
12. पेश	<i>Peśa</i>	1. हिरण्य	<i>hiranya</i>	gold.
		2. रूप	<i>rūpa</i>	form. (1) beauty (Dr. Sarup). (2) shape, form, ornament (Skold)
13. पयः	<i>Payah</i>	1. अन्नम्	<i>annam</i>	food.

		2. रात्रि	<i>rātri</i>	night. It swells (Dr. Sarup).
14. ब्रह्म	<i>Brahma</i>	1. अन्नम्	<i>annam</i>	food.
		2. धनम्	<i>dhanam</i>	wealth.
15. ब्रध्नम्	<i>Bradhnam</i>	1. अश्व	<i>aśva</i>	horse.
		2. महत्	<i>mahat</i>	vast.
16. भू	<i>Bhū</i>	1. पृथिवी	<i>pr̥thivī</i>	earth.
		2. अन्तरिक्ष	<i>anta-rikṣam</i>	mid-regions.
17. मही	<i>Mahī</i>	1. वाक्	<i>vāk</i>	speech The wide one (P).
		2. गो	<i>go</i>	cow.
18. मेधा	<i>Medhā</i>	1. धनम्	<i>dhana</i>	wealth.
		2. प्रज्ञा	<i>prajñā</i>	understand- ing, wisdom.
19. मेघ	<i>Megha</i>	1. यज्ञ	<i>yajña</i>	sacrifice.
		2. बलाहक	<i>balāhaka</i>	cloud. to sprinkle.
20. योनि	<i>Yoni</i>	1. उदकम्	<i>udakam</i>	water.
		2. गृहम्	<i>gṛham</i>	home.
21. यश	<i>Yaśa</i>	1. अन्नम्	<i>annam</i>	food.
		धनम्	<i>dhanam</i>	wealth. glory (P)
22. रजः	<i>Rajaḥ</i>	1. रात्रि	<i>rātri</i>	night.
		2. ज्योति	<i>jyoti</i>	rays. region (Dr. Sarup).
23. रथम्	<i>Ratham</i>	1. आदित्य	<i>āditya</i>	sun.
		2. रथम्	<i>ratham</i>	chariot.
24. व्योमन्	<i>Vyoman</i>	1. अन्तरिक्ष	<i>antarikṣa</i>	mid-regions.
		2. दिशा	<i>diśā</i>	space.
25. वृत्र	<i>Vṛtra</i>	1. मेघ	<i>megha</i>	cloud.
		2. धन	<i>dhana</i>	wealth.
26. वेति	<i>Veti</i>	1. खादन	<i>khādana</i>	to eat.
		2. कान्ति	<i>kānti (karma)</i>	to appear beautiful or to shine
27. वयुनम्	<i>Vayunam</i>	1. प्रशस्य	<i>praśasya</i>	good or prai- se worthy.

		2. प्रज्ञा	<i>prajñā</i>	understand- ing. Desire or wisdom (Dr. Sarup). Rules, Ways, Expedients (Dr. Sarup) Desire, Usage, Pathway, Intelligence (Skold)
28. शम्बर	<i>Śambara</i>	1. मेघ	<i>megha</i>	cloud.
		2. उदक	<i>udaka</i>	water
		3. बल	<i>bala</i>	strength. Thunderbolt (Dr. Sarup)
29. शची	<i>Śacī</i>	1. कर्म	<i>karma</i>	action.
		2. वाक्	<i>vāk</i>	speech.
30. शक्वरी	<i>Śakvari</i>	1. बाहु	<i>bāhu</i>	hand.
		2. ऋक्	<i>ṛk</i>	riks which enabled Indra to kill Vritra.
				शक् To be able.
31. श्रवस्	<i>Śravas</i>	1. अन्नम्	<i>annam</i>	food.
		2. धन	<i>dhana</i>	wealth.
		3.		glory.
32. स्वधा	<i>Svadhā</i>	1. उदक	<i>udaka</i>	water.
33. सलिलम्	<i>Salilam</i>	1. बहु	<i>bahu</i>	much or plenty.
		2. उदकम्	<i>udaka</i>	water.
34. स्वसराणि	<i>Śwasarāṇi</i>	1. अहन्	<i>ahan</i>	days.
		2. गृह	<i>gr̥ha</i>	homes.
35. हरित्	<i>Harit</i>	1. दिक्	<i>dik</i>	space.
		2. नदी	<i>nadī</i>	river.
		3. अङ्गुली	<i>angulī</i>	finger.
36. ज्योतिः	<i>Jyotiḥ</i>	1. उदक	<i>udaka</i>	water.
		2. लोकः	<i>lokaḥ</i>	people or region.

2. In case of many synonyms the finer shades of meaning of words are entirely neglected and obliterated. For example,

Nighantu puts such words as Kavi, Medhavi, Kanva, Vipra, together. Any one familiar with the language knows that Kavi means the "Seer" while Vipra means "Illumined" (in mind) which is not quite the same meaning.

3. Nighantu groups certain words with names, whilst their proper significance would class them as adjectives. In such cases it seems reasonable to restore to these their meaning. By doing so it is found that the meaning of the text (Riks) is simplified.

For example:

"adbhutam" meaning "mahat" while the derivative and current sense is "wonderful".

"Arjunam" means "rupa" form but its current meaning is "Shining White".

"Arusham" is taken as "rupa" whilst it should mean "Red or Rosy Light".

"Iravatyah" is a नदीनाम "Nadinama" whilst it is only an adjective which may indicate movement and thus a "River". So also "Urjaswatyah" ऊर्जस्वत्यः means "Nadi" river, whilst it should mean "the shining ones".

मन्द्र "Mandra" according to Yaska means "vak" or speech. It means "sweet" or "pleasant" and only secondarily conveys the meaning "speech".

Some words:

			According to Nighantu		In ordinary speech it means
1. तृप्ति	<i>Trpti</i>	उदकम्	<i>Udakam</i>	Water	Satisfaction because it satisfies thirst.
2. धिषणे	<i>Dhiṣaṇe</i>	द्यावापृथिवी	<i>Dyāvā pr-thivī</i>	Heaven & Earth	One who has the understanding.
3. कोश	<i>Kośa</i>	मेघ	<i>Megha</i>	Cloud	Something which can hold a liquid;

					a hollow; a case, etc.
				(Pail, Treasure—Dr. Skold)	
4. ब्रध्न	<i>Bradhna</i>	अश्व	<i>Aśva</i>	Horse	Something that fills or pervades; foundation.
5. नर	<i>Nara</i>	अश्व	<i>Aśva</i>	Horse	Powerful; Strong, Ruler; Masculine, Leader; Fighter.
6. महत्	<i>Mahat</i>	उदकम्	<i>Udakam</i>	Water	Vast, wide.
7. मेधा	<i>Medhā</i>	धनम्	<i>Dhanam</i>	Wealth	Understanding; Wisdom; Grasp; Comprehension.
8. मधु	<i>Madhu</i>	उदकम्	<i>Udakam</i>	Water	Sweet; Honey; Sweet drink, Honey (Skold)
9. पितुः	<i>Pituh</i>	अन्नम्	<i>Annam</i>	Food	Father, Progenitor.
			(Food-Sarup)		
10. आयुधानि	<i>āyudhāni</i>	उदकम्	<i>Udakam</i>	Water	Weapons, Instruments.
11. प्रजापति	<i>Prajāpati</i>	यज्ञ	<i>Yajña</i>	Sacrifice	Lord of the People.
12. मरुत्	<i>Marut</i>	रूप	<i>Rūpa</i>	Form	Storm Gods.
13. मेघ	<i>Megha</i>	यज्ञ	<i>Yajña</i>	Sacrifice	Cloud.
14. सूनृता	<i>Sūnṛtā</i>	अन्नम्	<i>Annam</i>	Food	Happy truth or pleasant truth.

Additional words:—

1. लोहम्	<i>Loham</i>			Gold	Iron
2. नभ	<i>Nabha</i>	साधारणानि	<i>Sādhāraṇāni</i>		Sky

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3. वनम्	<i>Vanam</i>	रश्मि	<i>Raśmi</i>	Rays.	Forest, delight.
4. सप्त	<i>Sapta</i>	रश्मि	<i>Raśmi</i>		Seven
ऋषयः	<i>ṛṣyaḥ</i>				sages.
5. साध्याः	<i>Sādhyāḥ</i>	रश्मि	<i>Raśmi</i>	Rays	Kind of gods
6. सुपर्णाः	<i>Suparnāḥ</i>				with good wings.
7. घृताची	<i>Ghṛtācī</i>	रात्रि	<i>Rātri</i>	Night	घृ to shine
8. भानु	<i>Bhānu</i>	अहर्	<i>Ahar</i>		Shining
9. वृत्र	<i>Vrtra</i>	मेघ	<i>Megha</i>	Rains or	The coverer.
				Clouds.	वृ <i>Vri</i> to cover
10. गल्दा	<i>Galdā</i>	वाक्	<i>Vāk</i>	Speech	with gal + धी To fall, Drops (Yaska) Vessels (Dr. Sarup) Extracted juices (Dr. Sarup)
11. गंभीरा	<i>Gambhīrā</i>	वाक्	<i>Vāk</i>	Speech	Inscrutable (Dr. Sarup)
12. बेकुर	<i>Bekura</i>	वाक्	<i>Vāk</i>	Speech	कृ <i>Kṛ</i> “Flood of light or water” (Dr. Sarup) “One who gives light, inspires awe” (Skold)
13. स्वधा	<i>Swadhā</i>	उदक	<i>Udaka</i>	Water	Self-law
14. तेज	<i>Teja</i>	उदक	<i>Udaka</i>	Water	Brightness, Lustres.
15. वध्वः	<i>Vadhvaḥ</i>	नदी	<i>Nadī</i>	River	वह्, = To bear also वह्निः from the same root.
16. गभस्ति	<i>Gabhasti</i>	मनुष्यः	<i>Manuṣya</i>	Man	Rays (Dr. Sarup)
17. हेम	<i>Hema</i>	उदकम्	<i>Udakam</i>	Water	Gold.

(5) The psychological significance of proper names, though noticed by Yaska, is hardly given its full value in his interpretations of the Riks.

It is clear from the study of the Riks that these proper names do not always indicate an individual but imply a certain psychological quality or guna and they stand for the individual or the power possessing that quality. This becomes more clear when we find adjectival forms of proper names used in connection where the entire trend indicates the inner quality or guna. For instance, "Indra" is the name of a god, but Vedic language could use "Anindra" and "Indratama"—derivative words from Indra in the sense "One without Indra" and "Most full of Indra Quality" respectively. In fact, Indra himself is called "Parashara" "Vanquisher of foes". But "Parashara" is another proper name.

Below is given a list of such names and their formations:

- | | | |
|--------------|--------------------|---|
| 1. इन्द्र | <i>Indra</i> | (1) Indriya—"One belonging to Indra."
(2) Indratama—"Most full of 'Indra' (hood)"
(3) Anindra—Without Indra—"without the Indra-quality." |
| 2. पराशर | <i>Parāśara</i> | इन्द्रन्: Indan=To be powerful.
Name of a sage, but also used as an adjective of Indra and other gods.
"The supreme overcomer or vanquisher," " <i>Parān Shātayati.</i> " |
| 3.* अङ्गिरस् | <i>Angiras</i> | From the same root as "ag," indicating the same quality of flaming will as the fire. Angirastame,—
="Most full of Angirasa"—Angirasa-hood. |
| 4. गोतम | <i>Gotama</i> | "Most full of light" or "go" |
| 5. कण्व | <i>Kanva</i> | "Shining" or "the shining one". |
| 6. नोधा | <i>Nodhā</i> | "One who utters the Rik" or "praise". |
| 7. सवितृ | <i>Savitṛ</i> | From "Su" "to give birth to" or "to create", the creator. |
| 8. दधिक्रवन् | <i>Dadhikravan</i> | "One who ascends tearing" दधत् क्राम्यति |

* Yaska derives it as follows: Vnit + agra:

One who leads in front i.e. leader ("of the Aspiration") i + Anja=इ + अञ्ज

He omits Ag: अग् forceful movement forwards,—Impulsion.

9. नवग्वा	<i>Navagvā</i>	Nine-rayed "Of nine gaits" (Dr. Sarup)
10. दशग्वा	<i>Daśagvā</i>	Ten-rayed.
11. कुत्स	<i>Kutsa</i>	"one who tears the earth" "one who ploughs" Prithivim Krunataté.
12. अगस्त्य	<i>Agastya</i>	From the same root as Agni—"one who holds in him the flaming power."
13. च्यवन	<i>Cyavana</i>	"he from whom the Rik flows". ¹ "Collector" (according to Yaska).
14. वसिष्ठ	<i>Vasiṣṭha</i>	"Vas, to shine"—"most shining one"
15. विश्वामित्र	<i>Viśwāmitra</i>	"the friend of all" or "all-loving"
16. भरद्वाज	<i>Bharadvāja</i>	"one who holds in him the substance"
17. अत्रि	<i>Atri</i>	"the devourer".
18. दीर्घतमस्	<i>Dīrghatamas</i>	"long-in-darkness"
19. गविष्ठिर	<i>Gaviṣṭhira</i>	"steadfast-in-light"
20. जमदग्नि	<i>Jamadagni</i>	"he of the flaming Fire"
21. वृत्रहन्तम	<i>Vṛtrahanṭama</i>	"most full of the quality of killing Vritra."
22. उर्वशी	<i>Urvaśī</i>	"wide-enjoying or wide delight"
23. गृत्समद	<i>Gṛtsamada</i>	"one who delights in the praise" wise and happy (according to Yaska) Gru: to invoke.
24. भृगु	<i>Bhṛgu</i>	"he who has the shining body" ² "he who has the flaming body"
25. ऋभु	<i>R̥bhu</i>	"he whose lustres are wide," uru <i>Bhāsah</i> .
26. पूषन्	<i>Pūṣan</i>	"One who nourishes" push to nourish.
27. सूर्य	<i>Sūrya</i>	"the illuminator", sur to shine.
28. वरुण	<i>Varuṇa</i>	"the wide one" from uru wide.
29. अश्विनौ	<i>Aśvinau</i>	"one who covers the road" according ³ to Yaska, but it can also be derived from "impulsion", "movement", "force", "impetuous" and "en- joying".

¹ "Cyāvayitāram stomānam".² *Briyamāno na déhé*³ "Aśnute Adhwānam or Vyāpnoti Adhwānam".

30. अर्यमन् *Aryaman* From Ri "to go", the same from which ar and *ārya* are derived.
 1 "Power of Truth-Consciousness working as force".
 31. अथर्वन् *Atharvan* "the moving one" negative from if थर्व
 32. वामदेव *Vāmadeva* "the God of Delight" or "the delight-god."
 33. पुरुरवस् *Pururavas* "many-voiced" or "much-crying".
 "Crying much"(Dr. Sarup.)

It is important for the student of the Veda to bear in mind the original meaning of words that have subsequently hardened into proper names. While understanding or translating the Riks one has always to apply the original meaning and see how it fits into the context. "Indratama", and such other forms clearly show that the Vedic language was plastic and even when it referred to the individual it kept prominently before the mind the aspect of quality suggested by the original meaning.

NIRUKTA

After the Nighantu begins the Nirukta proper; there is a lucid commentary on Yaska by Durga which greatly helps the student in following the Nirukta and which occasionally suggests its own meaning and interpretation of the Riks.

There are 513 words of which the exposition is given by the Nirukta, of these 215 are from Rig-Veda and not found elsewhere, 485 words are traceable to Rig-Veda, 33 cannot be traced in the Rig-Veda, 8 are found only in the Nirukta. (Dr. Skold).

It begins with the classification of parts of speech which are four, (1) Noun, नाम (2) Verb, आख्यात (3) Preposition उपसर्ग (4) Indeclinable particles, निपात. Then follows a discussion about the relative importance of subject and verb in a sentence. Name indicates the state of "being" while the verb that of the "becoming". He quotes शाक टायन Shaktayana who maintains that "all names are ultimately derived from verbs", while he quotes Garga who says

“not all”. Garga believes there are many names adopted from “usage”. The discussion about the philosophy of grammar is very profound and deals with some of the fundamental aspects of language. “Yaska’s fundamental notion about language is that all words can be reduced to their primordial elements which he calls roots.” (Dr. Sarup).

Yaska then lays down the arguments of those who maintain (the Purva paksha) that the “Vedic Riks cannot have any consistent meaning” because (1) the construction of sentences is not like that in ordinary language, (2) genders and numbers and other attributes are applied to inanimate objects and things used in the ritual, (3) there is inconsistency and impossibility in the Riks, e.g. asking ओषधीः, “Oshadhis—trees and herbs—to save the Yajamana which is impossible, (4) of contradiction in the Mantras e.g. Indra being a God cannot have enemies still the Riks describe him as “conquering” them, (5) contradictory functions are attributed to several gods e.g. अदिति, Aditi, is said to be “all”, she is also मना Mata, the mother of all; then she is also पृथिवी, Prithivi, therefore Mother and Daughter at the same time.”

Against this Yaska puts the following:

(1) Words have a meaning. Therefore Riks having words must convey some meaning. (2) You have not to take these Riks literally always. Inanimate objects are described as animate metaphorically and not literally. (3) It is the pervading power shakti; of the ओषधीः Oshadhis that is invoked and not the gross tree. (4) Gods are inscrutable. It is only as an उपमा (metaphorically speaking) that Indra conquers his enemies. (5) Each word has a primary sense and a secondary sense. We must take the one that is meant for the context.

But then, is grammar the only science that can help one to understand the Veda? Yaska says “No”. He quotes four verses praising the man who knows the real meaning of the Veda. Yaska quotes the following:

स्थाणुरयं भारवाहः किलाभूदधीत्य वेदं न विजानाति चार्थम् ।
योऽर्थज्ञ इत्सकलं भद्रमश्नुते नाकमेति ज्ञानविधूतपाप्मा ॥

(Sama—Veda)

“He who knows not the meaning of the Veda after studying it is like a post that bears the burden; he who knows the meaning having his sins removed, enjoys all delight and attains felicity (*Samaveda*)”.

यदगुहीतमविज्ञातं निगदेनैव शब्दते ।

अनग्नाविव शुष्कैधो न तज्ज्वलति कहिचित् ॥ संहितोपनिषद—सामवेद

“The (Vedic) learning (which is) merely recited aloud as a (mechanical) prayer is like a dry fuel in a place without fire which never blazes forth into a flame”.—*Samhitopanishad* (*Sama-Veda*).

Then Yaska quotes the following:

उत त्वः पश्यन्न ददर्श वाचमुत त्वः शृण्वन्न शृणोत्येनाम् ।

उतो त्वस्मै तन्वं विसस्त्रे जायेव पत्य उशती सुवासाः ॥ —X. 71. 4.

“Even though seeing the speech (with one’s eyes) one, as it where, sees it not, another one even though listening to it hears it not. To some (rare) one does she reveal her body as the loving spouse he person covered with beautiful garments, to the gaze of her Lord”

उत त्व सन्ध्ये स्थिरपीतमाहुर्नैनं हिन्वन्त्यपि वाजिनेषु ।

अधेन्वा चरति माययैष वाचं शुश्रुवां अफलामपुष्पाम् ॥ —X. 71. 5.

“A single man said to have drunk deep—the inner meaning—in his friendship (with the power of speech) is followed in ascertaining the meaning attainable even by verbal knowledge; while the other man who merely repeats the words moves by the power of formation without cows (Rays of Light) listening only to words without fruit, without flowers”.—X. 71. 5.

It is in this connection that Yaska says “साक्षात्कृतधर्माणि ऋषयः संवभूवुः” a passage which has been already quoted before.

“Formerly, the seers were those who had realised the essence of religion; fearing, that the people who would succeed them would not be able to maintain the same status they gave the knowledge of the Veda by recital of the Mantras”.*

* साक्षात्कृत धर्माणिः ऋषयो बभूवु स्तेवरेभ्यो साक्षात्कृत धर्मभ्य उपदेशेन मंत्रान् संप्रादुः (निरुक्त)

Apart from these overt references by Yaska there are other evidences from the Riks themselves which indicate that the Vedic seers refer to an inner, deeper, symbolic significance of the Veda. Says Dirghatamas:

ऋचो अक्षरे परमे व्योमन्यस्मिन्देवा अधि विश्वे निषेदुः ।
यस्तन्न वेद किमुचा कर्ष्यति य इत्तद्विदुस्त इमे समासते ॥

I. 164. 39.

“The Riks are in the supreme all-pervading ether, in the immutable (‘Brahman’ according to Sayana) to which resort all the Gods; what will the (mere) Riks do for him who knows it not? But one who knows it by them is he, verily, well-established.” I. 164. 39.

So also Rishi Vamadeva speaks in the 4th Mandala:

एता विश्वा विदुषे तुभ्यं वेधो नीथान्यग्ने निष्या वचांसि

IV. 3. 16.

“O Creator”, “O Fire”, To Thee, the all knowing One, have I spoken these secret words which bring forth the fruit”.

Similar other passages indicate that the Vedic seers know of a secret meaning of the Veda.

Next he emphasises the importance of “Realization” in interpreting the Veda. He says “formerly the Rishis were men of Realization” and fearing that the people who succeeded them would not be able to maintain the same height of spirituality “they gave the knowledge of the Veda by recital (orally), thus sprang the many branches of Vedic knowledge”.¹

It is clear from the above that even in Yaska’s times there was the tradition of a Vedic path of Realization which had got completely obscured. For, further on he grants the possibility of quite new interpretation of the Veda. He says “उपसन्नाय तु निर्ब्रूयात् यो बालं विज्ञातुं स्यान्मेधाविने तपस्विने”—and Durga adds in his commentary “न तयोरसाध्यं किञ्चिदस्ति । तपसा हि स्वयमपि वेदार्थः प्रादुर्भवेदेव यथा मन्त्राः प्रादुरभूवन् पूर्वेषामृषीणाम् ॥

“One should approach for the Vedic knowledge the man who has the knowledge, one who is either a “genius” or a great “Yogin” for to him the Mantras reveal their inmost secret.”

¹ Chanda, vyākaraṇa, jyotiṣa, śikṣā, etc.

This chapter discusses very beautifully the philosophy of grammar. It seems certain that it has played a great part in the evolution of the grammar of the Sanskrit language.*

The second chapter discusses the various rules of formations of words, e.g.

(1) The elimination of parts:

1. तत्त्वाः	" <i>Tatvāḥ</i> "			" <i>Tat</i> " तत् "	" <i>Twam</i> " त्वम्
2. ज्योति	" <i>Jyoti</i> "	comes from	द्युत्	" <i>Dyut</i> "	to shine.
3. घन	" <i>Ghana</i> "		हन्	" <i>Han</i> "	to kill.
4. बिन्दु	" <i>Bindu</i> "		भिद्	" <i>Bhid</i> "	to divide.
5. सिकता	" <i>Sikatā</i> "		कस्	" <i>Kas</i> "	to dry.
6. स्तोकम्	" <i>Stokam</i> "		च्युतिर्	" <i>Cyutir</i> "	to fall.
7. तर्क	" <i>Tarku</i> "		कृत्	" <i>Kṛt</i> "	to cut.
8. बाट्य	" <i>Bātya</i> "		भट	" <i>Bhat</i> "	to fill.

(2) The derivation of words:

1. द्वार	" <i>Dwāra</i> "	comes from	वृङ्क्	" <i>Vṛnk</i> "	to divide.
2. भरुजा	" <i>Bharujā</i> "	" "	भस्ज्	" <i>Bhrasj</i> "	to shine.

(3) Special significances of certain words: e. g. "*Damunāḥ*" in ordinary sense "one who quells, controls".

But, says Yaska, in the Veda it means "Fire". He then takes the list of synonymous from the Nighantu beginning with "Pri-thivi" and discusses the origin of various words quoting Riks in support of his interpretation or his contention. Thus "go" according to him carries as we have seen above eight or nine significances.

Yaska here discusses the origin of words used in the Veda. The fundamental notion of Yaska about language is that "all words can be reduced to their primordial elements which he calls roots," (*Sarup*) for example:

I. From पच्	" <i>Pac</i> "	पाचक	" <i>Pācaka</i> "	पठ्	" <i>Paṭh</i> "
पाठक	" <i>Pāṭhaka</i> "	बुध	" <i>Budha</i> "	बोध	" <i>Bodha</i> "
भिद्	" <i>Bhid</i> "	भेदः	" <i>Bheda</i> "		

II. Yaska also believes that one should not depend entirely upon the grammatical rules in deriving the forms of Vedic words.

III. The derivation of words must be in accordance with the sense, for example,

- | | | | |
|-------------------------------|-----|----------|----------|
| 1. "Akta" can be derived from | i) | अञ्ज् | Anj or |
| | ii) | अज् | Aj |
| 2. "Anudāra" can be split up | i) | अन्+उदार | An+Udāra |
| as | ii) | अनु+दार | Anu+Dāra |
| 3. "Apavana" can be split up | i) | अ+पवन | A+Pavana |
| as | ii) | अप+वन | Apa+Vana |

For these three points I am indebted to Dr. Laxman Sarup.

It is impossible for any rational mind to accede to Yaska's contention in spite of the illustration. If words such as "go"; "ṛtam"; "aditi"; "ilā" etc. are to carry so many significances in a work of such a fixed form as the Rig-Veda, then we may dismiss as impossible any attempt at interpreting it.

I will take only one instance of नदी "nadi", river, and try to show how he has all along erred in his effort at Vedic interpretations by insisting on the ritualistic and traditional meaning (see appendix).

A list of the उपसर्गः prefixes to nouns and verbs.

- | | | |
|----------|--------------|---|
| 1. प्र | <i>Pra</i> | —Indicates a movement "forward" also "intensity" of the movement of the action indicated by the verb. |
| 2. परा | <i>Parā</i> | —Used in the same sense of (1) inverted order; e.g. Paragata and (2) "away"; e.g. परेहि <i>Parehi</i> (3) "towards". |
| 3. प्रति | <i>Prati</i> | —"To" or "towards"; also "back" or "return"; "counter" or "against". |
| 4. परि | <i>Pari</i> | —"Round", "on all sides"; "about"; "from all sides". |
| 5. अति | <i>Ati</i> | —"Much" augmenting the sense of the noun or verb; atidhana "very"; "exceedingly"; "excessively"; also indicates "beyond"; "over" (with nouns) "Surpassing"; "eminent", "super". |
| 6. सु | <i>Su</i> | —Indicates "respect" or "happiness"; "good state" connected with the adjective or the noun with which it is used; with |

		verbs also "ease" or "fecility" in the action indicated by the verb. (with names and prepositions) surpassing; superior.
7. निर्	<i>Nir</i>	—"Without".
8. उद्	<i>Ud</i>	—(prefix to nouns and verbs) "Upwards"; "upon"; "above"; "over"; etc. "motion upwards".
9. दुर्	<i>Dur</i>	—"Bad"; "evil"; "wicked"; "hard"; "difficult".
10. अनु	<i>Anu</i>	—"After"; "behind"; "according to" "in consonance".
11. अपि	<i>Api</i>	—Placing near or over; "reaching"; "proximity"; "nearness"; also (as separate) "also"; "too"; "besides"; "even"; "though"; used with verbs and nouns. Also "Any" (wish or expectation).
12. सम्	<i>Sam</i>	—"Together"; "well".
13. नि	<i>Ni</i>	—"Separation"; "reverse action".
14. अप	<i>Apa</i>	—(Used with verbs and nouns) prefix to verbs "away"; "deterioration"; "bad"; "inferior"; "unworthy"; etc.
15. उप	<i>Upa</i>	—"Nearness"; "contiguity"; (pervasion) ("nearness" alone it indicates "contiguity").
16. अधि	<i>Adhi</i>	—"Over"; "above"; "concerning"; "presiding" or "chief".

A List of the Nipatas.

1. इव	" <i>Iva</i> "	—"as"; "like"; "as if" showing: comparison <i>upamāarthé</i> :
2. न	" <i>Na</i> "	—"not"; in Veda <i>prati shédhārthiya</i> ; "like"; <i>"upamāarthé ca"</i> :
3. चित्	" <i>Cit</i> "	—"indefiniteness"; also <i>padapurāṇé</i> ; (expletive) Respect, <i>pujāyām</i> .
4. इ	" <i>i</i> "	— <i>avakutsité</i> (wonder etc.) "interjection",

5. नु "Nu" —"indeed" (showing possibility).
 6. च "Ca" —"and"; "also"; "moreover" *Samucayārthé*.
 7. अथ "Atha" —"here"; "now"; also "then"—"afterwards".
 8. वा "Vā" —*Vicāraṇarthé* "reflection"; *Samucayārthé* "or"; "and".
 9. आ "ā" —"Yea" showing assent, "yes"; as a prefix it means "near", "to", "towards".
 10. ह "Ha" —"verily"; "indeed" (emphasis), also expletive (vocative particle).
 11. हि "Hi" —"for"; "because"; "indeed"; "certainly"; also expletive.
 12. ननु "Nanu" —"indeed"; "inquiry"; "surity"; "certainty".
 13. अथापि "Athāpi" —"moreover"; "again"; *Samucayārthé*.
 14. किल "Kila" —"verily"; "indeed"; "certainly"; "false or feigned action".
 15. मा "Mā" —"prohibition" *pratiśédhé*;
 16. खलु "Khalu" —"certainly"; "verily"; "indeed" expletive also (prohibition or negation).
 17. शश्वत् "śaśvat" *Vicikitsa*, "interrogation"; "suspense"; "*vivéka purvakovadharanābhiprāyaḥ*".
 18. नूनम् "Nūnam" —"certainly", in Veda "now", *adyatana*.
 19. ऊ "Oo" —expletive (interjection) —calling.
 20. कम् "Kam" —expletive.
 21. इम् "Em" —expletive.
 22. इत् "it" —expletive.
 23. सीम् "Sīm" —*parigrahārthiyah*; *padapurnaha*; "all round" "inclusive", expletive.
 24. इदम् "Idamu" *padapurané*, "this" expletive.
 25. तद् "Tadu" —"that" expletive.
 26. त्व "Twa" —*Vinigrahārthiyah*; *ékah*, some one;
 27. अपि "Api" —"even" and *Sambhāvané* "possible".
 28. तु "Tu" —"but" हेत्वर्थे *Hetwarthé*

Yaska acknowledges clearly that there are unknown grammatical forms and words with unknown derivation in the Rig Veda.

There are ten types of difficulties, which lend the Vedic standpoint into the realm of the uncertain. They are:

1. *Padajāti anavagatami*: Uncertainty as to the nature of a grammatical form, e.g. त्व *Twa*. It is not certain whether it is a noun (pronoun) or a Nipat-particle. It can be either.

2. *Abhidhéya anavagatamam*: Uncertainty about the object indicated by a noun, e.g. *Shitām*. According to different competent authorities it can mean (1) Hands (2) Female organ (3) Gall Bladder (4) Meda i.e. fat.

3. *Swarānavagatam*: Uncertainty about the accentuation, e.g. *Vanéna Vāyo nyadhāyi Cākan* X. 29. 1 *Cākan* here is equal to *Chāyan* "seeing".

4. *Sanskārānavagatam*: Uncertainty about the formation and derivation e.g. *Irmāntāsah*: I.163.10. It can be "those having well formed haunches". We can favour his meaning in the light of the fact that it is an adjective of horses.

5. *Guṇā navagatam*: Uncertainty about the qualifying nature of the adjective, e.g. *Karuḷati*, "having gaps in the teeth". It is uncertain whether it goes with भग (*bhaga*) or with पुष (Pūṣā).

6. *Vibhāgānavagatam*: Uncertainty about the correct way of breaking up a form into its components e.g. *Méhna* V.39.7. It can be (1) *Manhaniyam pujārthām—Rāham* or (2) *yan ma iha nasti*

7. *Kramānavagatam*: Uncertainty as to the right order of the grammatical forms, e.g. *Upamadhvam mé vacasé somyāya* III.32.: Here whether *upa* should be taken with *ramadhvam* or not?

8. *Vikshepanavagatam* e.g. छावा न पृथिवी "*Dyāvā na prthivī*"

9. *Adhyāhārānava gatam*: Uncertainty as to what is kept understood. e.g. *Dānamanso no manushyān*.

10. *Vyavadhāna anavagatam*: Uncertainty as to the connection in the context *Vāyushcha niyutvān* VII.39.2.

Here the word *Niyutvān* even though away is taken with *Vāyu* and not with *Pūṣan* because the context requires it.

Then two principles are laid down in order to explain the

words ennumerated in the Nighantu. (1) “*ékārtham anéka shabdam*” “many words convey one meaning or indicate one object.” (2) *Anékāarthāni éka śabdāni*: “One word has multi-meanings.” From this is explained the dictum *Dhātūnām anékāarthāni* or *Samān karimāṇaḥ dhātavaḥ* “The roots have multi-significance”. Yaska deprecates as we have seen above mere dependence on grammar in interpreting the Riks. He would rather recommend an interpretation which is perhaps grammatically less justifiable and one that is not in keeping with the tradition, if it is given by a Tapaswin तपस्विन् “one who has undergone a spiritual discipline”, or one who is मेधाविन् Medhavin—a man who has a comprehensive and wide intellect probably with a touch of genius.

Words with psychological import found in the Veda (not exhaustive).

We have seen in another context that even proper names carry with them a psychological sense which dominates the Vedic usage, e.g. “Indra” is not only a God but the word stands for a certain quality or power. So forms like “*Anindra*” (अनिन्द्राः) and “*Indratama*”—“Most full of Indra-quality” are found in the Veda along with similar formations based on “Angirasa”, “Vasishta” etc. Here we give a list of some words which carry a psychological meaning in the Veda.

1. मति	<i>Mati</i>	Thought.
2. विप्र	<i>Vipra</i>	One who is illumined.
3. मेधावी	<i>Medhāvī</i>	One who has the understanding.
4. प्रचेताः	<i>Pracetāḥ</i>	One who is conscious.
5. धिष्य	<i>Dhiṣṇya</i>	One who possesses comprehension.
6. धियंधा	<i>Dhiyandhā</i>	One who holds the knowledge or intellect.
7. विचेताः	<i>Vicetāḥ</i>	One who has a developed or seeing consciousness.
8. सुमति	<i>Sumati</i>	Happy thought.
9. विचर्षणि	<i>Vicarṣaṇi</i>	One who has the sight.
10. सुधीति	<i>Sudhīti</i>	One who has a happy understanding or thought.

11. मयोभुवः	<i>Mayobhuvah</i>	That which arises on the plane of Delight.
12. मयस्	<i>Mayas</i>	Delight.
13. भद्रम्	<i>Bhadram</i>	Happy state.
14. रयिम्	<i>Rayim</i>	Delight.
15. सुमना	<i>Sumanā</i>	Happy in mind.
16. मनु	<i>Manu</i>	The thinker.
17. हृदय	<i>Hṛdaya</i>	The heart.
18. कल्याण	<i>Kalyāṇa</i>	Happy state or well-being.
19. शिव	<i>śiva</i>	Beneficent.
20. रत्नम्	<i>Ratnam</i>	Delight.
21. कवि	<i>Kavi</i>	Seer.
22. ऋषि	<i>ṛṣi</i>	One who has vision (of the Truth).
23. विपश्चित्	<i>Vipaścit</i>	One illumined in consciousness.
24. मनीषी	<i>Manīṣī</i>	The thinker.
25. दक्ष	<i>Dakṣa</i>	Powerful in will.
26. श्रवस्	<i>śravas</i>	That which is heard—inspiration.
27. ऋतम्	<i>ṛtam</i>	Truth.
28. धीर	<i>Dhīra</i>	One who has the understanding.
29. देवयुः	<i>Devayuh</i>	One who wishes to go to the Gods.
30. सत्य	<i>Satya</i>	Truth.

Many words derived from the roots मन्, बुध, चित्, धा, ज्ञा also carry a psychological sense.

Sri Aurobindo on Vedic Nirukta—his own method

“By a careful and minute study of its word-families it is possible to a great extent to restore the past history of individual words.

“It is possible to account for the meanings actually possessed by them, to show how they were worked out through the various stages of language—development, to establish the mutual relation of different significances and to explain how they come to be attached to the same word in spite of the wide difference and sometimes even the direct contrity of their sense-values. It is possible also to restore lost senses of words on a sure and scientific basis

and to justify them by an appeal to the observed laws of association which governed the development of the old Aryan tongues, to the secret evidence of the word itself and to the corroborative evidence of its immediate kindred". (*On the Veda* p. 62.)

"It does not follow that because a Vedic word may or must have had at one time a particular significance, that significance can be safely applied to the actual text of the Veda".

But we *do* establish a sound sense and a clear possibility of its being right sense for the Veda. The rest is the matter of comparative study of the passages in which the word occurs and of constant fitness in the context.

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Secondly, one remarkable feature of language in its inception is the enormous number of different meanings of which a single word was capable and also the enormous number of words which could be used to represent a single idea.

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Even in its latest and most literary form it is lavish of varieties of meanings for the same word; it overflows with a redundant wealth of synonyms.

Vedic Sanskrit abounds in variety of forms and inflexions; on its psychological side it has not yet crystallized, is not entirely hardened into rigid forms of intellectual precision. The word of the Vedic Rishi is still a living thing, a thing of power, creative, formative. It is not yet a conventional symbol for an idea. It carries within it the memory of its roots, it is still conscient of its own history". (*On the Veda* p. 63.)

Sri Aurobindo and the Message of the Buddha

IT is a matter of great satisfaction that our Governments, both Central and State, as well as our people celebrated with great pomp the 2,500th anniversary of the *Mahāparinirvāṇa* of the Buddha. It gives an ocular demonstration that whatever our ancestors might have thought before, we at any rate, men and women of the present day, think that there is essential unity between Hinduism and Buddhism, and that the life and teachings of the Buddha are a source of great inspiration not only to those who profess his faith, but to all citizens of our great country, nay, to the whole world.

THE BUDDHA WAS A HINDU OF HINDUS

It is absurd to say that the Buddha preached a religion which was opposed to Hinduism. On the contrary, the Buddha was one of the greatest Hindus that ever lived. In this connection I cannot but quote the words of Mahatma Gandhi ⁽¹⁾: "It is my deliberate opinion that the essential part of the teachings of Buddha now forms an integral part of Hinduism, It is impossible now for Hindu India to retrace her steps and go behind the great reformation that Gautama effected in Hinduism. By his immense sacrifice, by his great renunciation and by the immaculate purity of life, he left an indelible impress upon Hinduism, and Hinduism owes an eternal debt of gratitude to that great teacher....It is my fixed opinion that Buddhism or rather the teaching of the Buddha, found its full fruition in India. It could not be otherwise, for Gautama was a Hindu of Hindus. He was saturated with the best that was in Hinduism, and he gave life to some of the teachings that were buried in the Vedas and which were overgrown with

weeds. His great Hindu spirit cut its way through the forest of words, meaningless words, which had overlaid the golden truth that was in the Vedas. He made some of the words in the Vedas yield a meaning to which the men of his generation were utter strangers, and he found in India the most congenial soil". I endorse everyone of these words. I especially want to emphasize what he said in the last sentence in the above quotation: "He (Buddha) made some of the words in the Vedas yield a meaning to which the men of his generation were utter strangers". Yes, that is what the Buddha did, and from that point of view, he might be said to have done for our ancient Vedic religion and culture what Francis Bacon and Rene Descartes did two thousand years later for Greek philosophy. That is to say, he brought about a Renaissance of that religion and culture. Even before the time of the Buddha, such a reaffirmation of the essential truths of the Vedic religion and a rejection of an enormous mass of false ideas that had grown round it, was made by the *Upaniṣads* and the *Gītā*. I need only refer to Mund. Up. I. 1. 5 and the *Gītā* ii. 42-46, where the criticism of the Vedas is made, not for the sake of rejecting them, but for the purpose of checking some erroneous views of their real import which were current at the time. The criticism of the customs and the philosophical views that were current in his time by the Buddha was made on exactly the same lines.

LIKE SOCRATES, THE BUDDHA BROUGHT PHILOSOPHY
DOWN FROM HEAVEN TO DWELL ON EARTH

It is said of Socrates that he brought philosophy down from heaven to dwell on earth, nay, that he brought it even to the market-place. The same may be said of the Buddha. He removed all vestiges of any policy of *apartheid* in the matter of communicating the truths of philosophy, and he made them available for all, for the proud scions of the noble priestly families, as well as for the lowliest in birth. In this matter he stole a march over the sages of the *Upaniṣads*. We know the story of *Satyakāma Jābāla*, told in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* and immortalized in the famous

poem of Rabindranath, named *Brāhmaṇa*. Whatever interpretation we may put upon this story, one thing is clear, namely, that Rṣi Gotama had to break the custom prevalent in his day, of admitting only *Brāhmaṇas* to his *āśrama* by accepting *Satyakāma* as his pupil, on the ground that he who could speak the truth boldly even when it was most damaging to him, was certainly entitled to receive *Brahmavidyā*. For the Buddha everyone was entitled to receive his teaching if he showed eagerness for it. Of course, he would have to put himself under discipline, and that a rather severe one, if he was to benefit by it. But no man, by reason of his caste or sect or position in life, was debarred from receiving his instruction. One result of this was that he had to make his teaching intelligible to the meanest intellect.

PHILOSOPHY MUST ANSWER THE PROBLEMS OF LIFE: THE VALUE-CENTRIC PHILOSOPHY OF THE BUDDHA

It was clear, therefore, that he had to bring his philosophy into intimate relation to life, and put its problems in a way in which the common man could understand him. Now everybody understood sorrow and also wanted to get rid of it. He therefore based the problem of philosophy upon the undisputed fact of sorrow, and described it as the fourfold one, namely, (i) sorrow, (ii) the causes of sorrow, (iii) the extinction of sorrow, and (iv) the path leading to the extinction of sorrow. This way of putting the problem of philosophy is no new one in our country. *Maitreyī* for instance, as stated in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, put it similarly in the form: What shall I do with that which does not give me immortality?, the only difference between these two ways of stating the fundamental philosophical problem is that while *Maitreyī* based it upon the need of attaining immortality, the Buddha derived it from the need of obtaining release from sorrow. Not only in form, but in substance also, the two problems are the same, for, as we shall see, the complete extinction of sorrow leads to immortality. The complete extinction of sorrow, in the case of the Buddha, and immortality in the case of *Maitreyī*, are fundamental *needs* of our lives which we feel are *worth*

attaining. This way of putting the problem of philosophy in terms of values is the standpoint of the philosophy of values, and the Buddha's, therefore, is a value-centric philosophy.

How will such a philosophy proceed? It is clear that it cannot proceed by giving us an elaborate metaphysics of what exists or what does not exist. For philosophy is not primarily interested in that question, its chief interest being centred in the question relating to value, namely, what will give us complete freedom from sorrow? Thus the Buddha came to the following conclusion: *All metaphysic which deals merely with the question of what is or what is not is useless; that is to say, all metaphysics as ontology is useless.*

KANT AND THE BUDDHA COMPARED

A somewhat similar conclusion, though on totally different grounds, was arrived at by the famous European philosopher Kant about the status of metaphysics. Kant said that all metaphysics is impossible, unless it is a metaphysics of phenomena. But why did he say so? Because for him all knowledge is limited to phenomena, and therefore, any knowledge of noumena is impossible. And as metaphysics claims to give knowledge, therefore, metaphysics of noumena is impossible. And why did he say that all knowledge is only of phenomena? Because by an arbitrary fiat, very strange for a philosopher who claimed to have freed his philosophy from all traces of dogmatism, he restricted the term knowledge to categorial knowledge, that is, such knowledge as could be grasped with the help of the categories of the understanding, such as Cause, Substance, etc., and as this knowledge extended only to phenomena, he declared all knowledge to be only knowledge of phenomena. This was a great tragedy for philosophy, one of the worst in its history. It put the whole realm of ultimate realities outside the pale of metaphysics. What remained was a metaphysics of phenomena, a truncated metaphysics, hardly worthy of the name. No oriental philosopher would touch it with a pair of tongs. The whole subsequent course of metaphysics in the West suffered severely for this one mistake

of Kant, for while it gave an easy loophole to ontologists like Hegel, who had no difficulty in showing that by an improvement of the nature of the categories, categorial knowledge could be applied to noumena, it made the position of the axiologists absolutely hopeless, because values could not be brought under the categories, and therefore, they had to remain outside the pale of metaphysics. And even now they are suffering, as we see in the philosophies of Münsterberg, Rickert, Windelband, Royce and even Hartmann, What a pity!

The Buddha was in a better position than this, because he was born in India. Here there was no prejudice against knowledge that was not knowledge through the categories. On the contrary, the entire tradition of the Vedas and the *Upaniṣads* was in his favour. The axiological tradition had already taken deep root in the soil of the country, and the Buddha had only to remove the weeds to produce a wonderful piece of axiology.

THE SILENCE OF THE BUDDHA

We see, therefore, that the general axiological position of the Buddha is supported by the Vedic tradition. And an offshoot of this axiological position is the view held by him of the uselessness of the purely metaphysical questions about the existence of the soul, the finitude or infinitude of the world, etc. This would be an excellent explanation of the silence of the Buddha when asked his opinion on these metaphysical questions. It would show that from his point of view, rather than waste one's time over these metaphysical questions, one should follow the Eightfold Path chalked out by him and receive the Enlightenment which would automatically solve these questions. But a very different view of his silence has been held by a large number of European scholars, including Rhys Davids, Oldenberg, Warren, St. Hilaire and others. They point to several Buddhist texts which, in their view, give a clear indication of the agnostic, if not sceptical position of the Buddha on the question of the existence of the soul.

Let us consider some of these texts and see whether the interpretation they have put upon them is correct or whether

they support the view we have taken of the Buddha's position.

Let us first take the story of the monk Vacchagotta, narrated in Vacchagotta Sutta. The story is that this monk approached the Buddha and asked him, "Is there the Ego?" When he asked this question, the Buddha was silent. He put then the opposite question, "Is there not, then, the Ego?" And still the Buddha maintained silence. And then the monk Vacchagotta left the place. But after he had gone, Ānanda put the question to the Buddha: "Why have you not answered the questions put to you by the monk Vacchagotta?" To this the Buddha replied: "If I, Ananda, when the wandering monk Vacchagotta asked me, 'Is there the Ego?', had answered, 'The Ego is', this, Ananda, would have confirmed the views of those Samanas and *Brāhmanas* who believe in permanence. Again, when Vacchagotta asked me, 'Is there not the Ego?', if I had answered, 'The Ego does not exist', then, Ananda, that would have confirmed the views of those Samanas and *Brāhmanas* who believe in annihilation. Further, if, Ananda, when the wandering monk Vacchagotta asked me, 'Is there the Ego?', and I had answered, 'Yes, the Ego is', would that have served my end, Ananda, by producing in him the knowledge that all existences are non-Ego?" Ananda replied, "That would not, sir". The Buddha then said, "But if, Ananda, when Vacchagotta asked me, 'Is there not the Ego'? I had answered, 'The Ego is not', then that would have caused him to pass from one bewilderment to another, for he would have felt it strange how this could be, and he would have asked himself: 'My Ego, did it not exist before? but now it exists no longer'".

What conclusions are we to draw from this? O'denberg thinks that this clearly indicates that in the Buddha's view there was no Ego, and that it was only regard for Vacchagotta's susceptibilities which prevented him from expressing it and made him decide to remain silent. Edmund Holmes in his excellent work *The Creed of Buddha* has dissented from the view of Oldenberg, and we think, with good reason. He says, ⁽²⁾ "This criticism is, I think, based upon a misconception of Buddha's mental attitude. Buddha saw clearly enough that the answer to Vacchagotta's question, as to all similar questions, was 'Yes and No'—'Yes' from this

point of view, 'No' from that....Had Buddha shared Dr. Paul Carus' fundamental antipathy to the Ego—to the whole idea of selfhood—he would, I think, without hesitation have answered the monk's questions with an uncompromising *'No'. Had Buddha believed in the Ego, as the pious Christian believes in it, as a something (to use Dr. Rhys David's words) 'which flies out away from the body' and retains its individuality for all time, he would have answered the monk's question with an unqualified 'Yes'....That he said neither 'Yes' nor 'No' suggests that he neither believed in the Ego, as the Christian believes in it, nor disbelieved in it, as the votary of the 'religion of science' disbelieves in it, and leaves us to conjecture that his conception of the Ego, whatever form it may have taken, transcended the range of ordinary thought and would not suffer itself to be translated into intelligible speech".

We agree with Holmes. The soul does not belong to the class of those realities which can either be accepted with a "Yes" or rejected with a "No". Holmes calls such realities spiritual realities. We would prefer to call them values. It is the characteristic of this type of reality that its nature cannot be exhausted by calling it either existent or non-existent.

This would appear more clearly from another story which is given in the *Cūla Mālūnkya Sutta*. We give it in the form in which Oldenberg has given it.

"The venerable *Mālūnkya* comes to the Master, and expresses his astonishment that the Master's discourse leaves a series of the most important and deepest questions unanswered: 'Is the world eternal or is it limited by bounds of time? Does the Perfect Buddha live on beyond death? Does the Perfect Buddha not live on beyond death?' ". 'It pleases me not', says the monk, 'that all this shall remain unanswered, and I do not think it right; therefore I am come to the Master to interrogate him about these doubts. May it please the Buddha to answer them if he can' ".

To this the Buddha replied as follows: "What have I said to thee before now, *Mālūnkya*? Have I said, 'Come, *Mālūnkya*—

putta, and be my disciple; I shall teach thee whether the world is finite or infinite, whether the vital faculty is identical with the body or separate from it, whether the Perfect One lives on after death or does not live on, or whether the Perfect One lives on and at the same time does not live on after death or whether he neither lives on nor does not live on?' ”.

“Thou hast not said, Sire”, says *Mālūnkya*.

“Or hast thou,” Buddha goes on, “said to me: ‘I shall be thy disciple, declare unto me whether the world is everlasting or not everlasting, and so on?’ ”

“This also must Malunkya answer in the negative.”

“If a man”, Buddha proceeds, “were struck by a poisoned arrow, and his friends and relatives called in a skilful physician, what if the wounded man said: ‘I shall not allow my wound to be treated until I know who the man is by whom I have been wounded, whether he is a noble, a *Brāhmaṇa*, a *Vaiśya*, a *Sūdra* or if he said, ‘I shall not allow my wound to be treated till I know what they call this man who has wounded me, and of what family he is, or whether he is tall or short or of middle stature, and how his weapon was made with which he has struck me’, what would the end of the case be? The man would die of his wound”.

Why has Buddha not taught his disciples whether the world is finite or infinite, whether the saint lives on beyond death or not? Because the knowledge of these things does not conduce to peace and enlightenment.

Dr.T.R.V.Murti in his book *The Central Philosophy of Buddhism*, which, by the way, is perhaps the most authoritative book on the subject, has pointed out⁽³⁾ the mistake of those who try to infer from these words of the Buddha that he wanted to ban all metaphysical speculation as useless. In Dr. Murti’s view, what these words prove is not the uselessness of all metaphysics but only such metaphysics as deals with the question of the finitude or infinitude of the world, immortality of the soul, etc., and he points out in this connection the similarity of the Buddha’s views with those of the great European philosopher Kant. He also sees in this view of the Buddha the beginning of the Buddhist dialectic, which is aimed at showing that no finality can ever be

arrived at on the question of the existence or non-existence of the soul after death, the finitude or infinitude of the world, etc.

Edmund Holmes' remarks on this story are also very significant. He says,⁽⁴⁾ "When we read this dialogue we seem to have travelled far from the Indian idea that *knowledge* of reality is the first condition of 'salvation'. But, in truth, we have never really quitted it. The metaphysical path to knowledge was one which Buddha looked upon with distrust and aversion, but knowledge itself—the knowledge which has its counterpart in inward enlightenment, the knowledge of reality which makes for peace and deliverance—was the very goal to which the Path was intended to lead. The truth of things, as Buddha conceived of it, could not be set forth in a series of formulae, for (to go no further) the laws of language would make that impossible; but it could be lived up to and lived in too..."

The two views put forward, respectively, by these two scholars, do not, in my opinion, differ essentially from each other. Dr. Murti's view really means that reason or logic is inadequate to deal with the question of the ultimate realities. Hence they will have to be handled with the help of some other metaphysics which does not rest upon reason or logic. In fact, what it says is that categorial knowledge is not in a position to reach the indeterminates (*avyākṛtas*). The Buddha rose to the higher standpoint of criticism, and dialectic was born.

Holmes' view is not very different from this. He makes a distinction between knowledge through categories, which is incapable of giving an answer to these ultimate problems, and another knowledge which has its counterpart in inward enlightenment, which is knowledge that makes for peace. It is the first kind of knowledge which, according to the Buddha, is useless for the purpose of arriving at a solution of these ultimate problems. But this does not affect the position of the second kind of knowledge.

We fully endorse Dr. Murti's view that the Buddha's object is to show the weakness of categorial knowledge, and will join with it the view expressed by Holmes, namely, that this knowledge is to be replaced by that which makes for peace, for

deliverance. We will only add that this knowledge which makes for peace and deliverance is *knowledge of values*. The Buddha, therefore, has not banned all metaphysics, but only the metaphysics of reason, in order to make room for the metaphysics of values.

The third story which Oldenberg gives is that of the dialogue between King Pasenadi and *Khemā* Theri, which emphasizes more strongly the truth enunciated in the *Cūḷa Mālūṅkya Sutta*, namely, that the ultimate reality is not approachable through reason or logic. The story is as follows:

King Pasenadi of Kosala met the nun *Khemā* Theri and asked her, "Does the Perfect One exist after death?" to which she replied: No, O great king, he has not declared that the Perfect One exists after death. Similarly, he asked, "Does the Perfect One not exist after death?" to which she also gave the same reply. So also he asked, "Does the Perfect One exist after death and at the same time not exist after death?" to which she gave also the same reply. The king was perplexed, and finally asked, "What is the reason, venerable lady, what is the ground on which the Exalted One has not revealed this?" Then *Khemā* Theri replied: "Just as no one can measure the water in the great ocean, so also, the existence of the Perfect One cannot be measured by the predicates of the corporeal form, for he is deep, immeasurable, unfathomable as the great ocean. The Perfect One exists after death—this is not apposite. The Perfect One does not exist after death—this also is not apposite. The Perfect One neither does nor does not exist after death—this also is not apposite."

Dr. Murti interprets the meaning of this story as follows: "The questions are about the Unconditioned. Buddha is alive, unlike other philosophers, to the insuperable difficulties in conceiving the Transcendent in terms of the empirical. That form by which the *Tathāgata* is usually known is no longer present; he is free from measure and form, he is deep and unfathomable like the ocean. To say with regard to the ocean that it begins here or that it does not, etc., would be a piece of irrelevance. Likewise the *Tathāgata*, as the totality of things, is beyond predication. *Khemā* Theri gives almost an identical answer to King

Pasenadi; and this is later on confirmed by the Lord. The *Tathāgata* cannot be identified with the material and mental forms, nor can he be characterized by the absence of these. The utter inability to relate and characterize the Unconditioned in terms of the phenomenal is the reason why the *Tathāgata* cannot be answered outright..."⁽⁵⁾

Edmund Holmes interprets the story as follows: "Supreme Reality—the ideal object of all high thinking, of all knowledge, of all wisdom—is here symbolized by the Perfect One's existence. And that existence, we are told, is "deep, unfathomable, immeasurable as the great ocean". He then quotes with approval the remarks of Oldenberg, who says, "When such a reason is assigned for waiving of the question as to whether the Perfect One lives for ever, is not this very giving of a reason itself an answer? And is not this answer a 'Yes'? Not being in the ordinary sense, but still assuredly not a non-being: a sublime positive, of which thought has no idea, for which language has no expression, which beams out to meet the cravings of the thirsty for immortality in that same splendour of which the apostle says: 'Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him' ". The nun *Khemā*, Holmes continues, "had caught the spirit of her Master's teaching. The explanation that she gave of his teaching harmonises so well with those which he himself is reported to have given, when challenged with probing questions by Vacchagotta and *Mālūnkya*, that we must needs regard it as at least provisionally true." *Buddha kept silent because his heart was overfull, because he had too much to say* (italics ours).

Here also there is not much difference between the interpretations of these two scholars. What Dr. Murti says, namely, that the *Tathāgata's* nature is inexpressible by means of language, is precisely what Holmes also says and for which he also quotes the authority of Oldenberg. Holmes' net conclusion is that the Buddha kept silent because his heart was overfull, because he had too much to say. By the words "too much to say", he evidently means that what the Buddha wanted to say was something too deep for words.

This precisely agrees with the standpoint of the *Upaniṣads* concerning the nature of the Absolute. The *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, for instance, speaks of it as that “from which words come back with an unfulfilled mind”, thereby clearly pointing out that it is something inexpressible by means of words and unapproachable by the mind. Other characterizations, for instance, as “*aśabdam, aśparśam, arūpam, avyayam, tathārasam, nityam, agandhavaccayāt*”, which we find in the *Kāthopaniṣad*, are also on the same lines.

The *Tathāgata* is thus not accessible to thought or reason. But although not accessible to thought, it is the most positive of all positive realities. It is, in fact, the highest Value.

THE NAIRATMYA DOCTRINE OF THE BUDDHA

We shall now be able to understand the *Nairātmya* doctrine of the Buddha. *Nairātmya* does not mean, as many European scholars have tried to show, a doctrine which denies the existence of the soul, but it asserts that the soul is not a Substance cognizable by perception and reasoning and describable by means of the categories of thought. H.S. Gour has very clearly pointed out that when the Buddha denies the Ego, the Ego that is denied is the Ego that identifies itself with the sensations and perceptions and the mental images that an individual has. But that is only a way of affirming the existence of a deeper and more universal Ego, without which *Nirvāṇa* is inconceivable. To quote his own words:⁽⁶⁾ “The Ego men speak of is one thing, the Ego which Buddha teaches you to think of is quite another. Without the Ego, *Nirvāṇa* is inconceivable. The two Egos are not the same, and yet they are not distinct. They are like the cocoanut fruit, of which there is the shell and the kernel within; the shell is the individual Ego which receives the direct impact of sensations, the kernel is the larger Ego which equally receives the impacts, though not directly; but nevertheless it does receive them and is influenced by their pressure”. He also connects the existence of the soul with the problem of rebirth and its ultimate cessation through *Nirvāṇa*. Thus, he says,⁽⁷⁾ “Man upon earth has the highest

form of the individual Soul, but he is not the limit of creation. As he rises in the scale of spirituality he has to discard the human frame in which his larger soul feels cramped. When therefore the cessation of rebirths is aimed at, it is not because rebirths *per se* are undesirable, but because the soul, which has outgrown its limitations, seeks a wider sphere for its activity. It is like a child to whom the coat has become too small with the growth of his body. As he needs a larger garment, so the larger soul needs a larger frame; and as such frame is unattainable in this world which is subject to rebirths, there must be the cessation of rebirth. This is all that *Nirvāṇa* means and can mean. It means that the human soul has outgrown the receptacle in which it dwelt."

From these quotations it appears that for Gour the Buddha has not denied the soul, but has refused to recognize the soul which is identified with an individual's feelings, sensations, perceptions and imaginations. Secondly, the soul which the Buddha has recognized is the universal soul, without which *Nirvāṇa* will lose all its meaning. Thirdly, the existence of the soul is an integral part of the Buddha's doctrine of rebirth and of the final cessation of it through *Nirvāṇa*. The idea which he wants to emphasize is that the soul is not a Substance, with a definite limit fixed to its expansion, but is capable of infinite expansion or development which requires first a series of rebirths, but which can finally be satisfied only by its passing into a universal state, when it will go beyond the series of rebirths. This is what he wants to express by saying, "It is like a child to whom the coat has become too small for his body". In other words, from his interpretation of the Buddha's conception of the soul, the soul is not a substance but a spirit.

The same idea of the soul's infinite growth, firstly, through a series of rebirths and finally, by transcending this series, also appears from Holmes' interpretation of the Buddha's view of the soul. In the chapter, entitled *A Misreading of Buddha* in the book already quoted⁽⁸⁾, he says, "...I wish to make it clear that if denial of the Ego is real, if its meaning is fully pressed home, the doctrine of reincarnation, which is undoubtedly the keystone of the whole arch of Buddhist thought, becomes pure nonsense,

The essence of the doctrine is that B inherits the whole of A's karma C the whole of B's, and so on. Unless the identity of A with B, of B with C, and so on, is as real as the identity, within the limits of each earth life, of the child with the youth and the youth with the man, the doctrine loses its meaning, and the arch of thought which it holds together becomes a ruinous heap. We must therefore either assume that the arch of Buddhist thought and doctrine had no keystone, or that the Buddhist denial of the "Ego" was "notional" rather than "real". Of these alternative assumptions, reason and common sense alike demand that we should adopt the latter."

Emphatically rejecting the attempts made by Rhys Davids, Paul Carus and other Western interpreters of Buddhism to bring the doctrine of reincarnation into line with the scientific theories of heredity, of physical causation and the like, as sophistical and inconclusive, he says, ⁽⁹⁾after enumerating the three kinds of immortality recognised by the modern 'religion of science', "But the immortality which the law of Karma makes possible is wholly different from this. The Karmic consequences of action are in the main inward and spiritual—an effect on the doer of what he habitually does. Here it is that the doctrine of reincarnation, when divorced from the doctrine of a reincarnating soul or Ego, loses its meaning and value, and becomes as widely fantastic as Western thought too readily assumes to be. It stands to reason that if there is no Ego, the inward consequences of a man's conduct will end abruptly at his death. What then? Are we to suppose that the outer consequences of his conduct, which have diffused themselves far and wide in his lifetime, will after his death—perhaps long after his death, for the return to earth may be long delayed—be reunited in the channel of a single human life? The supposition is not merely incredible, but absolutely unthinkable. The alternative supposition that B, the inheritor of A's Karma, will be rewarded (or punished)—presumably by an omnipotent magician—for A's conduct while on earth, is worse than unthinkable."

He thus endorses fully the point which Gour has stressed, namely, that rebirth is inconceivable without the Ego. The

second point on which emphasis has been laid by Gour, that *Nirvāṇa* is inconceivable without the Ego, is also accepted by him. "The paramount motive", he says,⁽¹⁰⁾ "was the prospect of escaping from the "whirlpool of rebirth" and attaining to the bliss of *Nirvāṇa*. That this goal should be won within the limits of a single earth-life, however virtuous, was not—we may rest assured—contemplated by Buddha, or by any of those thinkers who carried on the traditions of his teaching... 'The Buddhist', says Rhys Davids, 'hopes to enter, even though he may not reach the end of the Path in this life; and if he once enters therein, he is certain in some future existence, perhaps under less material conditions, to arrive at the goal of salvation, at the calm and rest of *Nirvāṇa*'. "He is certain". But is it he who will arrive at the goal, or someone else? Why does the life of sympathy and self-control tend to shorten the journey to *Nirvāṇa*? Obviously, because it makes for the spiritual development of the man who leads it, because it strengthens his character, deepens his insight, expands his consciousness, purifies his soul. But what if there is to be no identity between A, who is now walking in the path, and B, the next inheritor of his Karma?... We must at any rate assume, if we are to see any meaning in Buddha's appeal to mankind, that the identity between A and B is as real as the identity between the A of this year and the A of next year, however real (or unreal) that identity may be."

The whole process of rebirth being an illustration of what Holmes calls "soul-growth"—a term of which he seems to be very fond—it is clear that it cannot stop with rebirth but must continue till there is liberation from the series of rebirths, when the soul attains its true universal form. This is what Holmes points out⁽¹¹⁾—and herein he agrees with Gour's third point—by referring to the dialogue between Yamaka and Sariputta, in which the latter says to the former, "Considering now, brother Yamaka, that you fail to make out and establish the existence of the Saint in the present life, is it reasonable for you to say, "Thus do I understand the doctrine taught by the Blessed One, that on the dissolution of the body the monk who has lost all depravity is annihilated, perishes, and does not exist after death?" to which

Yamaka replies: "Brother Sariputta, it was because of my ignorance that I held this wicked heresy, but now that I have listened to the doctrinal instruction of the venerable Sariputta, I have abandoned that wicked heresy and acquired the true doctrine."

The conclusion which Holmes draws from this dialogue is just the opposite of what was drawn by Warren, who gave as the heading of each page of his translation of this dialogue, "There is no Ego". He points out that the belief of Yamaka, namely, that on the death of the Saint—at the moment when the cycle of earth-lives has come to an end—he ceases to be, is called in this dialogue a 'wicked heresy' and sums up his view of it as follows:⁽¹²⁾ "The whole discourse is directed nominally against Yamaka's 'wicked heresy,' but really against the erroneous belief that the individual Ego, the Ego which is associated with form, with sensation and the rest, is the true Ego—a belief which had generated in Yamaka's mind the 'wicked heresy', but really against the erroneous belief that the individual Ego, the Ego which is associated with form, with sensation and the rest, is the true Ego—a belief which had generated in Yamaka's mind the 'wicked heresy' that on the dissolution of the body the Saint is annihilated, perishes and does not exist. Indeed, it is no exaggeration to say that in this discourse disbelief in the reality of the Ego—the true Ego which transcends the limits of the transitory, and therefore passes beyond the reach of thought and language—is authoritatively condemned".

This view of the true Ego Holmes calls "the secret of Buddha". He goes on to point out that Buddha here falls into line with the thinkers of the *Upaniṣads*, who described by a series of negations what they regarded as the true Ego—the Divine in man.

SUNYATA

I have so far dealt with what may be called the Buddha's message, as derived from the words of the Buddha as recorded in Buddhist canonical works. I have now to make an excursion into the more philosophical portions of his teaching, as developed in the later schools of Buddhism, known as *Mahāyāna*. The main

changes which these schools introduced in the philosophical views have thus been summarized by Dr. Murti⁽¹³⁾:

(1) The conception of the supramundane Personality of Buddha (*lokottara*) as the essence of phenomena, *

(2) The Bodhisattva ideal of salvation for all beings, as against the private and selfish salvation for oneself of the *Srāvaka-yāna*, and the attainment of full Buddhahood, instead of Arhatship,

(3) The metaphysics of *Sūnyatā*—Absolutism—instead of a radical pluralism of elements.

I propose now to deal with these main features of the *Mahāyāna*, but in the order which is the reverse of that in which they have been put by Dr. Murti. That is to say, I shall deal first with *Sūnyatā*, and then with the cosmic conception of salvation, and lastly, I shall come to the superpersonal conception of the Buddha.

To come now to *Sūnyatā*. The first thing we have to notice here is that it does not mean at all what its name suggests, namely, the character of being void. It is, on the contrary, another name for the Buddhist Absolute.

Its general characteristics are thus stated by Stcherbatsky:⁽¹⁴⁾ "The term *sūnya* is in *Mahāyāna* a synonym for dependent existence (*pratītya-samutpāda*) and means not something void, but something 'devoid' of independent reality (*svabhāva-sūnyatā*), with the implication that nothing short of the whole possesses independent reality, and with the further implication that the whole forbids every formulation by concept or speech (*niṣprapañca*), since they can only bifurcate (*vikalpa*) reality and never directly seize it.... That the term never meant a mathematical void or simple non-existence is most emphatically insisted upon. Those who suppose that *sūnya* means void are declared to have misunderstood the term; they have not understood the purpose for which the term has been introduced. "We are Relativists, no Negativists", insists *Candrakīrti*."

This view, therefore, makes for Absolute Monism, for it asserts that nothing has reality, except the whole or the Absolute. This is the transcendental aspect of *Sūnyavāda*. Along with it there is the immanent aspect of it, which appears clearly from the famous saying of *Nāgārjuna*:

संसारस्यच निर्वाणात् नास्ति किञ्चिद्विशेषणम् ।
न निर्वाणस्य च संसारात् किञ्चिदस्ति विशेषणम् ॥

(English translation: "There is no difference between *Samsāra* and *Nirvāṇa*. There is no difference between *Nirvāṇa* and *Sam-sara*") As I have said elsewhere,⁽¹⁵⁾ "The monistic character of his (Nagarjuna's) philosophy is nowhere more evident than in this saying. *Nirvāṇa* or the Absolute is present everywhere. It is not something which stands above the errors, the sins, the weaknesses of the world of phenomenal existence. All these characteristics of the phenomenal world are, when viewed, sub *specie aeternitatis*, nothing but the Absolute or *Nirvāṇa*. *Nāgārjuna* in this way brings *Nirvāṇa* into contact with our everyday life. There can be no greater mistake than to suppose that *Nirvāṇa* is the monopoly of the anchorite. It is, on the contrary, the common heritage of mankind. It is this catholicity which is, indeed, the most distinguishing feature of the *Mādhyamika* philosophy, and link-it closely with the catholicity of the *Upaniṣads*.

Side by side with this conception that it is only the whole that is real and that this whole is immanent in the universe, there is the further view that the Absolute or *Sūnya* is not cognizable by reason. It can be grasped only by intuition. Further—and this is a point which is of fundamental importance from the axiological point of view—the Absolute is not an Existence but a Value. To quote Stcherbatsky again,⁽¹⁶⁾ "If you insist that there is a Buddha, you needs must concede that after *Nirvāṇa* there is none. But if you realize the relativity of the conception, never will the question about his existence occur to you. Buddha is merged quiescent in nature and beyond every possible determination. Those who proceed to dichotomise him as eternal or non-eternal, existent or non-existent, relative or non-relative, omniscient or non-omniscient, are all misled by words. They have no direct intuition of the absolute Buddha....Buddha must be regarded as the cosmical order (*dharmataḥ*) his body is the Cosmos."

The resemblance here with the standpoint of the *Vedānta* is too striking to be missed.

THE CONCEPTION OF NIRVANA OR COSMIC SALVATION

The doctrine of *Sūnyatā* leads to the conception of *Nirvāṇa*. In other words, it is only when the doctrine of relativity has made it possible to realize that everything that perception, conception and imagination have grasped is relative, and that the only reality which is outside the world of relativity is the Absolute itself or *Sūnya*, which is graspable not by perception, conception or imagination, but by a direct intuition or *Prajñā*, that it is possible to enter into *Nirvāṇa*. It is outside the scope of this paper to discuss how far the exponents of this view are justified in demolishing the opponents' view of the existence of a plurality of elements with the help of the logic of Relativity and then keeping this logic in abeyance and taking recourse to intuition for establishing the reality of the *Sūnya* or the Absolute. Stcherbatsky has dealt with this question, (17) and has quoted the views of *Candrakīrti* and *Ratnakūṭa* who frankly admit that the logic of Relativity is only to be employed to demolish all false conceptions, such as those held by the *Therāvāda* schools and not to establish the reality of the Absolute. The Buddhists, however, if pressed on this point, can answer with a very good *tu quoque* argument. They may say: What about you, *Vedāntists*, who have employed logic against us but have taken recourse to intuition in establishing the reality of Brahman? It must also be said that the Buddhists have made it very plain at the very beginning that logic is unable to answer any of the ultimate questions, such as, Is there a soul? Does the Perfect One live after death, etc. This, in fact, is the meaning of the Buddha's silence, as we have already seen.

Apart from this question, which we have mentioned only in passing, the really formidable obstacle to the acceptance of the reality of *Nirvāṇa* is the view, held by some of the greatest Western Buddhist scholars, that *Nirvāṇa* means complete extinction, Absolute Nothingness. St. Hilaire, for instance, says, "Everything converges towards demonstrating that *Nirvāṇa* is essentially nothing but a definite and absolute extinction of all the elements which compose existence." According to Eugene Burnouf, "*Nirvāṇa* is complete extinction not only of the material elements of

existence but in addition and above all, of the thinking principle". Rhys Davids, although he admits that *Nirvāṇa* does not mean extinction of passion and desire, yet says that it is the prelude to annihilation. It matters little, says Edmund Holmes, in criticising this view, whether *Nirvāṇa* is itself the night of Nothingness, or the twilight hour which precedes that. He continues: ⁽¹⁸⁾ "Did Buddha really believe this? Was it in the strength of this supreme negation that he devoted his life to the enlightenment and emancipation of his fellow-men, and won to himself the hearts of all who listened to his teaching? The hypothesis which we are invited to accept as an established conclusion is so wildly improbable, that we have a right to ask those who formulate it. As it happens, no such evidence is forthcoming." He continues: ⁽¹⁹⁾ "The truth is that here as elsewhere, when the west seems to be passing judgment on Buddhism, it is really delimiting the range of its own thought. To the consideration of the problem of the Perfect One's final state, as of all kindred problems, Western thought carries with it the metaphysical assumption which has obsessed it for two thousand years—the assumption that nothing exists, in the order of Nature, except what is perceptible by man's bodily senses". He then refers to Rhys Davids' interpretation of the Buddha's words, "while his body shall remain, he will be seen by gods and men, but after the termination of life, upon the dissolution of the body, neither gods nor men will see him". These words of the Buddha, Rhys Davids thinks, are a complete confirmation of his view, that according to the Buddha, there is no soul—anything of any kind which continues to exist, in any manner, after death. The inference of Rhys Davids is manifestly wrong. It can only be justified by his assumption that the Buddha believed only in the intrinsic reality of what is an object of perception, and so denied the reality of what is not perceptible. But this denial is against the whole tradition of Indian philosophy and cannot be fathered upon the Buddha. Discarding, therefore, the views of Rhys Davids, Saint-Hilaire, Burnouf and others, Holmes gives his own view of the Buddhist *Nirvāṇa*: "*Nirvāṇa* is a state of ideal spiritual perfection, in which the soul, having completely detached itself—by the force of its own natural expansion—from what is

individual, impermanent and phenomenal, embraces and becomes one with the Universal, the Eternal and the Real”.

We fully endorse this view of the Buddhist *Nirvāṇa*. We would like however, to point out that it omits to mention one very important feature of the Buddhist conception of *Nirvāṇa*, and that is its cosmic aspect. *Nirvāṇa* for Buddhism is not merely individual but cosmic. It insists upon cosmic salvation. There is no real salvation unless there is salvation for the whole world. The Bodhisattas or the emancipated souls take birth repeatedly in order to help the world to obtain emancipation. They do not want to enter into *Nirvāṇa* unless the whole world does so. It is open to them to have *nirupādhiśeṣa nirvāṇa* or total and final release, but they prefer to have what is called *apraṭiṣṭhita nirvāṇa*, because they want to devote themselves to the service of all beings. ⁽²⁰⁾

This idea of cosmic salvation puts the crown upon the Buddhist conception of *Nirvāṇa*. It constitutes the chief glory of Buddhist philosophy and its claim to be treated as one of the most catholic systems that the world has ever had. It also gives it an advantage over other equally liberal systems in the orthodox sector ⁽²¹⁾ of Indian philosophy, for although the idea of cosmic salvation is implicitly contained in several verses of the *Upaniṣads*, it was not generally accepted, except by a few schools of the Vedānta, as I have shown elsewhere ⁽²²⁾. In fact, the traditional view of salvation in the orthodox systems of Indian philosophy has been that of individual salvation. It is one of the great merits of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy that it has revived this idea of cosmic salvation which was lost in the course of centuries. We shall come to that presently.

THE CONCEPTION OF TATHAGATA OR THE BUDDHA

I conclude my account of the main features of the message of the Buddha with a brief reference to the conception of *Tathāgata* or the Buddha. Although *Sūnyatā* or *Prajñā* satisfies all the requirements of the metaphysical Absolute, yet the needs of religion, especially, that of cosmic salvation, demand the positing of a Divine Being who is All-Compassionate, and who saves all beings

by his grace. He is the connecting link between the Absolute and the phenomenal world. His position corresponds to that of *Īśvara* in the *Vedānta*, but there is this very important difference that he has no power of creation, that function being assigned to Karma. It may be, as Dr. Murti has pointed out, ⁽²³⁾ that the conception of *Tathāgata* is an after-thought, not warranted by the logic of the *Mādhyamika* system. But whether logically justifiable or not, it is, from the standpoint of axiology, of the highest importance. It gives meaning to cosmic salvation, as well as to the whole process of evolution of the world from ignorance to *prajñā*, from sorrow to blessedness. There are many instances recorded in the pages of the history of philosophy where conceptions which are not warranted by logic and which go even against it, are introduced, and where such introduction adds to the value of the system. The best known example is the idea of good of Plato, which is not warranted by his theory of ideas and which even go against it, but which wonderfully enhances the value of the system. Another very well-known example is that of Spinoza, whose *scientia intuitiva* and *intellectual love of God* are totally opposed to the mathematicism of the rest of his philosophy, yet they add very considerably to the value of his system.

II

COMPARISON OF THE MESSAGE OF THE BUDDHA WITH THAT OF SRI AUROBINDO

I now come to the second part of my task, which is to show the points of resemblance between the message of the Buddha and that of Sri Aurobindo. The first and foremost point of contact lies in the axiological character of both the systems. Buddhism, both in the earlier and later forms of it, as we have seen, is essentially axiological. The problem of existence or non-existence recedes into the background. The silence of the Buddha is an illustration of this. Buddhism, both in its earlier and later forms, is essentially axiological, as we have seen. The problem of existence or non-existence is treated as unimportant; what is considered

valuable is the problem of realization, firstly, of the values of ethical life, and then of the ultimate value or *Nirvāṇa*. The entire Buddhist philosophy is tuned to the problem of realization. The *Cūḷa Mālūṅkya* Sutta, as we have seen, brings this out very clearly. It is a severe indictment of philosophy losing itself in logical quibbles about the existence or non-existence of the soul, etc. Philosophical questions must have reference to the needs of life. This is the standpoint immortalized by *Maitreyī* in her famous statement: "What shall I do with that which does not confer upon me immortality?" Buddhism sticks fast to the spirit of philosophy as indicted in this famous question. It is much more than a way of life: it is a philosophy of values.

And of all philosophers, either in the East or in the West, Sri Aurobindo is perhaps the one who has stuck most consistently to the standpoint of values. His whole philosophy is value-centric; its aim is to show, firstly, how out of the Supreme Value or *Saccid-ānanda*, lesser values, like Mind, Life and Matter have originated, and how, again, by an inverse process, these lesser values will gradually ascend to the level of the higher values. The whole process of evolution, according to him, in fact, is a march from the lower to the higher values. The successive emergents, Matter, Life, Mind, etc. are all successive grades of value. ⁽²⁴⁾ Philosophy is a quest for values. It is to be sharply distinguished from Scientia.

Unlike the Buddhists, however, Sri Aurobindo has no contempt for existence. Existence, in fact, is itself a value. ⁽²⁵⁾ It is the value of objectivity. It is that value without which nothing can be admitted to the city of philosophy. But the peculiarity of this value of existence is this, that although without it a thing cannot enter the portals of philosophy, yet with it alone it cannot remain long in the city of philosophy. In fact, if it has only this single value of existence to show, philosophy will ask it quietly to leave, making room for other things which have got more values to show. This is because it prefers to people its city with concrete things, and not with abstractions, and existence, after all, is an abstraction. Existence, moreover, suffers from another defect, and that is, its stark neutrality. Everything is an existent. This reduction of all things to a dead level of absolute insignificance is

repugnant to philosophy. Another defect from which existence suffers is that it is absolutely static. Logical categories also are values. They come under the value called *Cit*.

The best way, therefore, to describe Reality from the standpoint of Value is to call it *Saccidānanda*. Of course, as Sri Aurobindo has repeatedly pointed out, this is not to be taken as a complete and perfect description of the nature of Reality, for Reality has innumerable aspects which are not included in any of the three which we have mentioned. Moreover, its *Sat* is very different from the *Sat* as our mind conceives it, and the same thing is true of its *Cit* and *Ananda*. But this is the nearest approximation to the nature of Reality possible from the standpoint of the mind.

THE IMPORTANCE OF YOGA OR SELF-EFFORT AND THE
PLACE OF GRACE IN THE MESSAGE OF BOTH SRI AUROBINDO
AND BUDDHISM

Buddhism is pre-eminently a philosophy of self-effort. By calling metaphysical discussions about the existence of the soul, etc., useless, it wants to lay emphasis on the need of self-improvement by following the Eightfold Path chalked out by the Buddha. There is in Buddhism no limit to what can be achieved by self-effort. "As you sow, so shall you reap"—this is the basis of the entire practical philosophy of Buddhism. Karma is only another name for this principle. Philosophy is a handmaid to realization. It is true that in the later forms of Buddhism, under the influence of the theistic ideas of the later *Upaniṣads*, there crept into Buddhism the concept of grace, but it never fitted well into this system and was more or less of the nature of an excrescence. As Dr. Murti has pointed out, ⁽²⁶⁾ Buddhism is a philosophy of works rather than of grace. Even when the principle of grace enters into it, it is not woven into the texture of its philosophy. It means an arbitrary intervention with the operation of the law of Karma, and cannot in any way be said to be originally connected with it. The normal individual, if left to himself, will through his own efforts attain salvation, if not in this life, at least after a series of rebirths. It is

for the spiritually weak that grace is needed. It is discriminatory, and there is no general descent of grace upon the whole of mankind.

In Sri Aurobindo the sphere of grace and self-effort are well-defined. The salvation that Sri Aurobindo speaks of is the salvation of the whole race of mankind, nay, of the whole universe, for it includes also the raising of the physical universe to the Divine status. This is a process which passes through definite stages. These stages are indicated by the terms, Matter, Life, Mind, etc. Each of these represents a definite level of consciousness which, from the side of its content, is a definite value. Salvation, which means salvation for the whole universe, is not a catastrophic process but a gradual one through the ascent, step by step, from one level to another. Self-effort on the part of the individual cannot effect it: it can only help it in this way, that it prepares the field for the descent of grace. This, of course, is not an unimportant matter. Unless the individuals by their self-effort have prepared the field ready for the descent of grace, grace will not descend. Sri Aurobindo thus has left a very wide field for the play of the individual's self-effort with a view to self-improvement. This effort of the individual to improve himself is called yoga. Yoga must, however be in harmony with grace, and that it can do by making the individual surrender himself to the Higher Light that comes from above. Yoga, therefore, as a practical discipline means the voluntary surrender of the individual to the Higher Power. This is what the *Gītā* means by saying: 'सर्वधर्मान् परित्यज्य मामेकं शरणं ब्रज' ("Abandoning all duties, take refuge in Me alone"). This is the path for the individual to follow if he wants self-improvement. It corresponds to the Eightfold Path of Buddhism. But the individual's effort alone will not bring about salvation, salvation, that is to say, in Sri Aurobindo's sense. It may give the individual *jīvanmukti*, but from Sri Aurobindo's point of view, it is not a very great thing. There have been so many *jīvanmuktas*, and yet the world is groping as much in the dark as before. Grace, therefore, in Sri Aurobindo's sense, is not a sporadic manifestation of Divine Benevolence conferred upon this individual or that individual but a regular feature of all

evolution, without which there cannot be any advance of the world from a lower to a higher stage.

Grace is very different from miracle. As I have said elsewhere, ⁽²⁷⁾“...Grace is not miracle. It is important to remember this. Miracle is a complete stranger to that to which it occurs. It is an absolutely unaccountable and inexplicable intervention. It is a freak, totally unrelated to anything which preceded its advent. Grace is very different from this. It comes not as a total stranger but as the most welcome guest, whose appearance was not only awaited, but most intensely desired. So that when it comes, it receives a most cordial welcome. It is in fact hailed as a Saviour or Messiah whose advent fulfils a long-cherished hope.”

There is, however, a form of grace recognized by Sri Aurobindo which is different from this, and which takes the form of a direct Divine intervention for the sake of meeting a critical situation. This is the descent of the Divine in the form of an *Avatāra* or a human being, of which the *Gītā* speaks in its fourth chapter. In addition to cutting the Gordian knot and saving the world from a critical situation, where the unaided efforts of human beings were not in a position to save it, the main purpose of such a descent, according to Sri Aurobindo, is to give man an ocular demonstration that he also is divine. But this is a very special descent, with a very limited purpose, and can in no way be looked upon as the normal way in which Divine Grace operates.

THE BUDDHIST ATTITUDE TOWARDS THOUGHT, AS COMPARED WITH THAT OF SRI AUROBINDO

I now come to the respective attitudes of Buddhism and Sri Aurobindo towards Reason or Thought. As I have already shown, the Buddha had no faith in philosophical speculations concerning problems that have no bearing upon the problems of life as enunciated by him, and therefore, when asked his opinion about them, he kept silent. This was a consequence of his general axiological standpoint. There were two conclusions which were drawn from his silence; firstly, that metaphysical questions regarding existence and non-existence were useless, the really

important question being that of value. The second conclusion that was drawn was that logic was unable to come to any definite conclusion on these problems. The later Buddhists, especially the *Sūnyavādins*, developed the second conclusion, and constructed a very subtle dialectic with a view to showing that neither existence nor non-existence of any object of perception or conception or imagination could be established. This dialectic was a terror to those who hapened to hold different views. It was sharper than the famous Occam razor, of which the mediaeval philosophers were mightily afraid.

But curiously enough, this dialectic was held in abeyance when it came to establishing their own position, namely, the Reality of the Absolute. In fact, *Sūnya* in their hands was a double-faced Janus, one face of which was the dialectic, which established the philosophy of Relativity, and the other face, the Absolute. When asked to elucidate this curious position, they frankly confessed that dialectic was only employed to demolish the opponent's position, and when that task was accomplished, it was withdrawn, and *Prajñā* emerged, affirming the reality of the Absolute. That was how the same *Sūnyavāda* had two faces, one, that of Relativity, and the other, that of the Absolute. They also gave the example of a cathartic which was given to remove all the poisons in the stomach but which itself was to be removed after it had done its work.

Sri Aurobindo agrees with the Buddha that thought is incompetent to answer the philosophical question about the ultimate nature of things, but he dissents from the views of his followers who employed thought to dispel all false notions and at the same time withdrew it when it came to establishing the reality of the Absolute. From his point of view, this procedure cannot in any way be justified. If thought is credited with the power to dispel all false notions, then it must be credited with the power also of revealing the Absolute. Why should it then be withdrawn in order that *Prajñā* may emerge and reveal it? Moreover, from Sri Aurobindo's point of view, *Prajñā* is a distinct and higher emergent which cannot be said to arise automatically with the withdrawal of thought or the dialectic. Thought or the dialectic

cannot annul itself. It can only be annulled by the emergence of a higher consciousness, or rather, it is transformed on the emergence of such a consciousness, for, in Sri Aurobindo's philosophy, there can be no talk of the annulling of any lower principle but only of its transformation. Sri Aurobindo has dealt very hard blows at thought. It always creates divisions, he says, and then makes a desperate attempt to join the divided parts. But this attempt is never successful. The synthesis which it makes is a patched-up union, and is not a real synthesis.

We live in an age of Thought or Reason. It has destroyed many false notions of earlier ages, but it has created many new ones of its own. For one thing, it has enormously increased egoism, which, in Sri Aurobindo's view, is mainly responsible for our present troubles. Our conquest of Nature, without our conquest of ourselves, has created special difficulties which have raised their Hydra heads in the shape of the atom bomb and the hydrogen bomb. If the world is to be saved, there must emerge another age, in which egoism will have no place. Such an age is bound to come, for evolution is to proceed further, as it is still far from its destined goal. Such is the great optimism of Sri Aurobindo.

SRI AUROBINDO'S CONCEPTION OF COSMIC SALVATION, AS COMPARED WITH THAT OF BUDDHISM

But the greatest link between Sri Aurobindo's philosophy and that of Buddhism is the conception of Cosmic Salvation. As we have seen, this is the greatest gift of Buddhism to the world. This is also the most distinguishing feature of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy. Individual salvation, however much it may have been extolled in the past, is not for Sri Aurobindo a very great thing. So many individuals, like *Vyāsa*, *Vaśiṣṭha*, *Bhṛgu* and others have obtained individual salvation but the world is still groping in the dark as much as before. The idea of individual salvation is a somewhat selfish idea, as it shows unconcern for the fate of others. It destroys the solidarity of the universe by treating the individual as if he could be complete in himself.

Sri Aurobindo, therefore, is not satisfied with individual salvation. What the world needs, and what the world is waiting for, is cosmic salvation, or salvation for the whole universe. And therefore, from the point of view of Sri Aurobindo, the Buddha's message of salvation for all is of enormous significance.

But there are some vital differences in their respective conceptions of Salvation. Salvation means for Sri Aurobindo complete divinization, acquiring completely the status of the Divine, and this is only made possible through the descent of *Saccidānanda* as Supermind into Earth-Consciousness. There have been other descents of *Saccidānanda* at other times but they have been descents in lower forms. The beings who have obtained salvation form a society of Gnostic Being, where each retains to the full his individuality, being both individual and universal. As Sri Aurobindo puts it,⁽²⁸⁾ "One in self with all, the supramental being will seek the delight of self-manifestation of the Spirit in himself but equally the delight of the Divine in all: he will have the cosmic joy and will be a power for bringing the bliss of the spirit, the joy of being to others; for their joy will be part of his own joy of existence. To be occupied with the good of all beings, to make the joy and grief of others one's own has been described as a sign of the liberated and fulfilled spiritual man. The supramental being will have no need for an altruistic self-effacement, since this occupation will be intimate to his self-fulfilment, the fulfilment of the One in all, and there will be no contradiction or strife between his own good and the good of others...." Sri Aurobindo has also pointed out very clearly that the Gnostic Beings will not be all of the same type, but will have different characteristics, though they will all be divine. Thus, he says,⁽²⁹⁾ "A supramental or gnostic race of beings would not be a race made according to a single type, moulded in a single fixed pattern; for the law of the supermind is unity fulfilled in diversity, and therefore there would be an infinite diversity in the manifestation of the gnostic consciousness, although that consciousness would still be one in its basis, in its constitution, in its all-revealing and all-uniting order".

The Buddhist conception of *Nirvāṇa* differs in essential

features from that of Sri Aurobindo, as sketched above, though there is the common idea running through both of salvation for the whole universe. In the first place, there is nothing in it which is comparable to Sri Aurobindo's idea of a Supramental descent into the world as the *conditio sine qua non* of salvation. In *Mahāyāna* Buddhism salvation takes place in two ways: (1) through the effort of individuals, and secondly, through the grace of the Buddhas. As a result of this double process, salvation will come to a constantly increasing number of individuals, and finally, it will come to all. This is very different from the process described by Sri Aurobindo, by which through the general descent of *Saccidānanda* in the form of the Supermind into the world as a whole, salvation, meaning the divinization of the world, will take place. Secondly, in Sri Aurobindo's view, the existence of Gnostic Beings, called Buddhas in *Mahāyāna* Buddhism, is an effect, and not the cause of salvation. Thirdly, the Gnostic Beings in Sri Aurobindo's philosophy form a society with definite relations to one another, whereas the Buddhas in the Buddhist scheme seem to be isolated individuals without any relation to one another, except that they have one common object, namely, the salvation of all beings.

But whatever their differences may be, the broad fact remains that both for Sri Aurobindo and Buddhism, what the world needs is salvation for all and not merely for isolated individuals, and that this salvation is bound to come.

This is the great message of hope which links Sri Aurobindo's philosophy closely with Buddhism.

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 - 21) I use the term 'orthodox sector' to indicate the systems which accept the authority of the Vedas and the *Upaniṣads*.
 - 22) See the first essay in the writer's book *The meeting of the East and the West in Sri Aurobindo's Philosophy*
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PUBLISHERS' NOTE

Vāsavaduttā exists in several versions, not all of them complete. What seems to be the last complete version has this note at the end (given here in the facsimile reproduction of the last page) : “Revised and recopied between April 8th and April 17th, 1916”. An earlier version has a similar entry at the end : “Copied Nov. 2, 1915—written between 18th and 30th October 1915. Completed 30th October. Revised in April 1916. Pondicherry”.

VASAVADUTTA

A Dramatic Romance

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The action of the romance takes place a century after the war of the Mahabharata ; the capital has been changed to Cowsāmbie ; the empire has been temporarily broken and the kingdoms of India are overshadowed by three powers, Magadha in the East ruled by Pradyota, Avunthie in the West ruled by Chunda Mahasegu who has subdued also the southern kings, and Cowsāmbie in the Centre where Yougandharāyan strives by arms and policy to maintain the house of Parikshit against the dominating power of Avunthie. Recently since the young Vuthsa has been invested with the regal power and appeared at Cowsāmbie, Chunda Mahasegu, till then invincible, has suffered rude but not decisive reverses. For the moment there is an armed peace between the two empires.

The fable is taken from Somadeva's Kathāsaritsāgara (the Ocean of the Rivers of Many Tales) and was always a favourite subject of Indian romance and drama, but some of the circumstances, a great many of the incidents and a few of the names have been altered or omitted and others introduced in their place. Vuthsa, the name of the nation in the tale, is in the play used as a personal name of the King Udayan.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA

<i>Vuthsa Udayan :</i>	King of Cowsâmbie.
<i>Yougundharāyan :</i>	His Minister, until recently Regent of Cowsâmbie.
<i>Roomunwath :</i>	Captain of his armies.
<i>Alurca :</i> }	Youngmen of Vuthsa's age, his friends and companions.
<i>Vasunthaca :</i> }	
<i>The King's Door-Keeper</i> <i>Chunda Mahasegu :</i>	King of Avunthie.
<i>Gopālaca :</i> }	His sons.
<i>Vicurna :</i> }	
<i>Rébha :</i>	Governor of Ujjayinie, the capi- tal of Avunthie.
<i>A Captain of Avunthie</i> <i>A servant</i>	
<i>Parīnaca :</i>	Attendant at Udayan's palace.
<i>Ungāricā :</i>	Queen of Avunthie.
<i>Vāsavaduttā :</i>	Daughter of Chunda Mahasegu and Ungāricā.
<i>Umbā :</i>	Her handmaiden.
<i>Munjoolicā :</i>	The new name of Bandhumuthie, the captive Princess of Sourash- tra, serving Vāsavaduttā.

Act I

Scene I

An inner room of the palace in Aoudhya
Chanda Mahasega, seated; Gopāla

Mahasega

- (2) Our strength retired from our luxurious boy,
(1) Unhisa Udairee dries my fortunes back
Defeated.

Gopāla

I have seen him in the ^{fight} battle
And I have lived to wonder C, he ranges
As lightly through the passages of war
As might the moonbeam feet of some bright laughing girl,
Her skill concealing in her reckless grace,
The measures of a rapid dance.

Mahasega

If this dawn
Brings its portentous morning to our gates,
Our sins are ended. Yet I had great dreams,
Oudh and Cossimby wore my high carved doors;
Ganges, Godāvary and Yamunā
In lion race besprayed with sacred dew
The moonlit jasmies in my pleasure grounds.
All this great world with me lay sleeping
At peace beneath the shadow of my brows.
But they were dreams.

Gopāla

Art thou not great enough
To live them?

Mahasega

- O my son, many high hearts
Must first have striven, many must have failed
Before a great thing can be done on earth;
(1) For one age, see the dreams another lives!
(2) And who shall say then that he is the man?

ACT I

SCENE 1

An inner room of the palace in Avunthie.

Chunda Mahasegu, seated ; Gopālaca.

Mahasegu

Vuthsa Udayan drives my fortune back.
Our strengths retire from one luxurious boy,
Defeated.

Gopālaca

I have seen him in the fight
And I have lived to wonder. O, he ranges
As lightly through the passages of war
As might the moonbeam feet of some bright laughing girl,
Her skill concealing in her reckless grace,
The measures of a rapid dance.

Mahasegu

If this dawn
Brings its portentous morning to our gates,
Our suns are ended. Yet I had great dreams.
Oudh and Cowsâmbie were my high-carved doors ;
Ganges, Godâvarie and Nurmadâ
In lion race besprayed with sacred dew
The moonlit jasmines in my pleasure grounds.
All this great sunlit continent lay sleeping
At peace beneath the shadow of my brows.
But they were dreams.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Gopālaca

Art thou not great enough
To live them ?

Mahasegu

O my son, many high hearts
Must first have striven, many must have failed
Before a great thing can be done on earth ;
And who shall say then that he is the man ?
One age has seen the dreams another lives !

Gopālaca

Look up towards the hills where Rudra stands,
His dreadful war-lance pointing to the east.
Fear not the obstacles the gods have strewn.
Why should the mighty man restrain his soul ?
Stretch out thy hand to seize, thy foot to trample,
A Titan's motion.

Mahasegu

High thou soarest now
But with eyes shut to the tempest.

Gopālaca

Suest thou at last
To foemen for the end of haughty strife ?

Mahasegu

That never shall be seen. The boy must fall.

Gopālaca

He is young, noble, beautiful and bold,
But let him fall. We will not bear defeat.

Mahasegu

How shall he fall, my son ? For Heaven-admired
Rudra still guards my stern and high-eyed fates,
But many gods stood smiling at his birth.
Luxmie came full of fortunate days ; Vishnu
Poured down his radiant sanction in the skies
And promised his far stride across the earth ;
Magic Saruswathie between his hands
Laid down her lotus arts.

Gopālaca

The austere gods
Help best and not indulgent deities.
The greatness in him cannot grow to man.
Excused from effort and propped on difficult ascent
Birds that are brilliant-winged fly near to earth.
His hero hours are rare forgetful flights.
Wine, song and dance winging his peaceful days
Throng round his careless soul, it cannot find
The noble leisure to grow great.

Mahasegu

There lives
Our hope. My son, spy out thy enemy's spirit,
Even as his wealth and armies ! Let thy eyes
Find out its weakness and thy hand there strike.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Gopālaca

Thou hast a way to strike ?

Mahasegu

I have a way.
Not noble like the sounding paths of war.

Gopālaca

Take it ; let us stride straight towards our goal.

Mahasegu

Thy arm is asked for.

Gopālaca

It is thine to use.

Mahasegu

Invent some strong device and bring him to us
A captive in Ujjayinie's golden groves.
Shall he not find there a jailor for his heart
To take the miracle of its keys and wear them
Swung on her raiment's border? Then he lives
Shut up by her close in a prison of joy,
Her and our vassal.

Gopālaca

Brought to the eagle's nest
For the eagle's child, thou giv'st him her heart's prey

To Vāsavaduttâ? King, thy way is good.
 Garooda on a young and sleeping Python
 Rushing from heaven I'll lift him helpless up
 Into the skiey distance of our peaks.
 Though it is strange and new and subtle, it is good.
 Think the blow struck, thy foeman seized and bound.

Mahasegu

I know thy swiftness and thy gathered leap.
 Once here ! his senses are enamoured slaves
 To the touch of every beautiful thing. O, there
 No hero, but a tender soul at play,
 A soft-eyed, mirthful and luxurious youth
 Whom all sweet sounds and all sweet sights compel
 To careless ecstasy. Wine, music, flowers
 And a girl's dawning smile can weave him chains
 Of vernal softness stronger than bonds can give
 Of unyielding iron. Two lips shall seal his strength,
 Two eyes of all his acts be tyrant stars.

Gopâlaca

One aid I ask of thee and only one.
 My banishment, O King, from thy domains.

Mahasegu

Gopâlaca, I banish thee, my child.
 Return not with my violent will undone.

SCENE 2

A hall in the palace at Cowsāmbie.

Yougundharāyan ; Roomunwath.

Yougundharāyan

I see his strength lie covered sleeping in flowers;
Yet is a greatness hidden in his years.

Roomunwath

Nourish not such large hopes.

Yougundharāyan

I know too well
The gliding bane that these young fertile soils
Cherish in their green darkness; and my cares
Watch to prohibit the nether snake who writhes
Sweet-poisoned, perilous in the rich grass,
Lust with the jewel love upon his hood,
Who by his own crown must be charmed, seized, change
Into a warm great god. I seek a bride
For Vuthsa.

Roomunwath

Wisely; but whom ?

Yougundharāyan

One only lives
So absolute in her charm that she can keep
His senses from all straying, the child far-famed

For gifts and beauty, flower by magic fate
On a fierce iron stock.

Roomunwath

Vāsavaduttâ,
Avunthie's golden princess ! Hope not to mate
These opposite godheads. Follow Nature's prompting,
Nor with thy human policy pervert
Her simple ends.

Yougundharāyan

Nature must flower into art
And science, or else wherefore are we men ?
Man out of Nature wakes to God's complexities,
Takes her crude simple stuff and by his skill
Turns things impossible into daily miracles.

Roomunwath

This thing is difficult, and what the gain ?

Yougundharāyan

It gives us a long sunlit time for growth ;
For we shall raise in her a tender shield
Against that iron victor in the west,
The father's heart taking our hard defence
Forbid the king-brain in that dangerous man.
Then when he's gone, we are his greatness' heirs
In spite of his bold Titan sons.

Roomunwath

He must
Have fallen from his proud spirit to consent.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Yougundharāyan

Another strong defeat and she is ours.

Roomunwath

Blow then the conchs for battle.

Yougundharāyan

I await
Occasion and to feel the gods inclined.

to Vuthsa entering

My son, thou comest early from thy breezes.

Vuthsa

The dawn has spent her glories and I seek
Alurca and Vasuntha for the harp
With chanted verse and lyric ease until
The golden silences of noon arrive.
See this strange flower I plucked below the stream !
Each petal is a thought.

Yougundharāyan

And the State's cares,
King of Cowsâmbie ?

Vuthsa

Are they not for thee,
My mind's wise father ? Chide me not. See now,
It is thy fault for being great and wise.

What thou canst fashion sovereignly and well,
Why should I do much worse ?

Yougundharāyan

And when I pass ?

Vuthsa

Thy passing I forbid.

Yougundharāyan

Vuthsa, thou art
Cowsâmbie's king, not time's, nor death's.

Vuthsa

O then,
The gods shall keep thee at my strong demand
To be the aged minister of my sons.
This they must hear. Of what use are the gods
If they crown not our just desires on earth ?

Yougundharāyan

Well, play thy time. Thou art a royal child,
And though young Nature in thee dallies long,
I trust her dumb and wiser brain that sees
What our loud thoughts can never reason out,
Not thinking life. She has her secret calls
And works divinely behind play and sleep,
Shaping her infant powers.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Vuthsa

I may then go
And listen to Alurca with his harp ?

Yougundharāyan

Thy will
In small things train, Udayan, in the great
Make it a wrestler with the dangerous earth.

Vuthsa

My will is for delight. They are not beautiful,
This State, these schemings. War is beautiful
And the bright ranks of armoured men and steel
That singing kisses steel and the white flocking
Of arrows that are homing birds of war.
When shall we fight again ?

Yougundharāyan

When battle ripens.
And what of marriage ? Is it not desired ?

Vuthsa

O no, not yet ! At least I think, not yet.
I'll tell thee a strange thing, my father. I shudder,
I know it is with rapture, at the thought
Of women's arms, and yet I dare not pluck
The joy. I think, because desire's so sweet
That the mere joy might seem quite crude and poor
And spoil the sweetness. My father, is it so ?

Yougundharāyan

Perhaps. Thou hast desire for women then ?

Vuthsa

It is for every woman and for none.

Yougundharāyan

One day perhaps thou shalt join war with wedlock
And pluck out from her guarded nest by force
The wonder of Avunthie, Vāsavaduttâ.

Vuthsa

A name of leaping sweetness I have heard !
One day I shall behold a marvellous face
And hear heaven's harps defeated by a voice.
Do the gods whisper it ? Dreams are best awhile.

Yougundharāyan

These things we shall consider.

Parīnaca

entering

Hail, Majesty !

A high-browed wanderer at the portals seeks
Admittance. Tarnished is he with the road,
Alone, yet seems a mighty prince's son.

Vuthsa

Bring him with honour in. Such guests I love.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Yougundharāyan

We should know first what soul is this abroad
And why he comes.

Vuthsa

We'll learn that from his lips.

Yougundharāyan

Hope not to hear truth often in royal courts.
Truth ! Seldom with her bright and burning wand
She touches the unwilling lips of men
Who lust and hope and fear. The gods alone
Possess her. Even our profoundest thoughts
Are crooked to avoid her and from her touch
Crawl hurt into their twilight, often hating her
Too bright for them as for our eyes the sun.
If she dwells here, it is with souls apart.

Vuthsa

All men were not created from the mud.

Yougundharāyan

See not a son of heaven in every worm.
Look round and thou wilt see a world on guard.
All life here armoured walks, shut in. Thou too
Keep, Vuthsa, a defence before thy heart.

Parīnaca brings in Gopālaca.

Gopālaca

Which is Udayan, great Cowsāmbie's king ?

Vuthsa

He stands here. What's thy need from Vuthsa ? Speak.

Yougundharāyan

Roomunwath, look with care upon this face.

Gopālaca

Hail, then, Cowsâmbie's majesty, well borne
Though in a young and lovely vessel ! Hail !

Vuthsa

Thou art some great one surely of this earth
Who com'st to me to live guest, comrade, friend,
Perhaps much more.

Gopālaca

I have fought against thee, king.

Vuthsa

The better ! I am sure thou hast fought well.
Com'st thou in peace or strife ?

Gopālaca

In peace, O king,
And as thy suppliant.

Vuthsa

Ask; I long to give.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Gopālaca

Know first my name.

Vuthsa

Thy eyes, thy face I know.

Gopālaca

I am Gopālaca, Avunthie's son,
Once thy most dangerous enemy held on earth.

Vuthsa

A mighty name thou speakest, prince, nor one
To supplications tuned. Yet ask and have.

Gopālaca

Thou heard'st me well ? I am thy foeman's son.

Vuthsa

And therefore welcome more to Vuthsa's heart.
Foemen ! they are our playmates in the fight
And should be dear as friends who share our hours
Of closeness and desire. Why should they keep
Themselves so distant ? Thou the noblest of them all,
The bravest. I have played with thee, O prince,
In the great pastime.

Gopālaca

This was Vuthsa then !

Yougundharāyan

And wherefore seeks the son of Mahasegu
Hostile Cowsâmbie ? Or why suppliant comes
To his chief enemy ?

Gopālaca

I should know that brow.
This is thy great wise minister ? That is well.
I seek a refuge.

Yougundharāyan

And thou sayst thou art
Avunthie's son ?

Gopālaca

Because I am his son.
My father casts me from him and no spot,
Once thought my own, will suffer now my tread.
Therefore I come. Vuthsa Udayan, king,
Grant me some hut, some cave upon thy soil,
Some meanest refuge for my wandering head.
But if thy heart can dwell with fear, as do
The natures of this age, or feed the snake
Suspicion, over gloomier borders send
My broken life.

Yougundharāyan

Vuthsa, beware. His words
Strive to conceal their naked cunning.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Vuthsa

Prince,
What thou demand'st and more than thou demand'st,
Is without question thine. Now, if thou wilt,
Reveal the cause of thy great father's wrath,
But only if thou wilt.

Gopālaca

Because his bidding
Remained undone, my exile was embraced.

Yougundharāyan

More plainly.

Gopālaca

Ask me not. I am ashamed.
Nor should a son unveil his father's fault.
They, even when they tyrannise, remain
Most dear and reverend still, who gave us birth.
This, Vuthsa, know; against thee I was aimed,
A secret arrow.

Vuthsa

Keep thy father's counsel.
If he shoot arrows and thou art that shaft,
I'll welcome thee into my throbbing breast.
What thou hast asked, I sue to thee to take.
Thou seek'st a refuge, thou shalt find a home :
Thou fleest a father, here a brother waits
To clasp thee in his arms.

Yougundhārāyan

Too frank, too noble !

Vuthsa

Come closer. Child of Mahasegu, wilt thou
Be king Udayan's brother and his friend ?
This proud grace wilt thou fling on the bare boon
That I have given thee ? Is it much to ask ?

Gopālaca

To be thy brother was my heart's desire.
Shod with that hope I came.

Vuthsa

Clasp then our hands.
Gopālaca, my play, my couch, my board,
My serious labour and my trifling hours
Share henceforth, govern. All I have is thine.

Gopālaca

Thine is the noblest soul on all the earth.

Vuthsa

Frown not, my father. I obey my heart
Which leaped up in me when I saw his face.
Be sure my heart is wise. Gopālaca,
The sentinel love in man ever imagines
Strange perils for its object. So my minister
Expects from thee some harm. Wilt thou not then
Assure his love and pardon it the doubt ?

Gopālaca

He is a wise deep-seeing statesman, king,
And shows that wisdom now. But I will swear,
But I will prove to thee, thou noble man,
That dearest friendship is my will to him
Thou serv'st and to work on him proudest love.
Is it enough ?

Vuthsa

My father, hast thou heard ?
A son of kings swears not to lying oaths.

Yougundharāyan

It is enough.

Vuthsa

Then come, Gopālaca,
Into my palace and my heart.

He goes into the palace with Gopālaca.

Yougundharāyan

O life
Besieged of kings ! What snare is this ? What charm ?
There was a falsehood in the Avunthian's eyes.

Roomunwath

He has given himself into his foemen's hands
And he has sworn. He is a prince's son.

Yougundharāyan

Yes, by his sire; but the pale queen Ungâricâ
Was to a strange inhuman father born
And from dim shades her victor dragged her forth.

Roomunwath

There's here no remedy. Vuthsa is ensnared
As with a sudden charm.

Yougundharāyan

I'll watch his steps.
Keep thou such bows wherever these two walk
As never yet have missed their fleeing mark.

Roomunwath

Yet was this nobly done on Vuthsa's part.

Yougundharāyan

O, such nobility in godlike times
Was wisdom, but not to our fall belongs.
Sweet virtue now is mother of defeat
And baser, fiercer souls inherit earth.

SCENE 1

Alurca ; Vasuntha.

He'll rule Cowsâmbie in the end, I think.

Artist, be an observer too. His eyes
Pursue young Vuthsa like a hunted prey
And seem to measure possibility,
But not for rule or for Cowsâmbie care.
To reign's his nature, not his will.

**This man
Is like some high rock that was suddenly
Transformed into a thinking creature.**

There's

His charm for Vuthsa who is soft as spring,
Fair like a hunted moon in cloud-swept skies,
Luxurious like a jasmine in its leaves.

**When will this Vuthsa grow to man ? Hard-brained
Roomunwath, deep Yougundharâyan rule ;
The State, its arms are theirs. This boy between
Like a girl's cherished puppet stroked and dandled,**

Chid and prescribed the postures it must keep,
 Moves like a rhythmic picture of delight
 And with his sunny smile he does it all.
 Now in our little kingdom with its law
 Of beauty and music this high silence comes
 And seizes on him. All our acts he rules
 And Vuthsa has desired one master more.

Vasuntha

There is a wanton in this royal heart
 Who gives herself to all and all are hers.
 Perhaps that too is wisdom. For, Alurca,
 This world is other than our standards are
 And it obeys a vaster thought than ours,
 Our narrow thoughts ! The fathomless desire
 Of some huge spirit is its secret law.
 It keeps its own tremendous forces penned
 And bears us where it wills, not where we would.
 Even his petty world man cannot rule.
 We fear, we blame; life wantons her own way,
 A little ashamed, but obstinate still, because
 We check but cannot her. O, Vuthsa's wise !
 Because he seeks each thing in its own way,
 He enjoys. And wherefore are we at all
 If not to enjoy and with some costliness
 Get dear things done, till rude death interferes,
 God's valet moves away these living dolls
 To quite another room and better play,—
 Perhaps a better !

Alurca

Yet consider this.
 Look back upon the endless godlike line.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Think of Parikshit, Janméjaya, think
Of Sathaneke, then on our Vuthsa gaze.
Glacier and rock and all Himâloy piled !
What eagle peaks ! Now this soft valley blooms;
The cuckoo cries from branches of delight,
The bee sails murmuring its low-winged desires.

Vasuntha

It was to amuse himself God made the world.
For He was dull alone ! Therefore all things
Vary to keep the secret witness pleased.
How Nature knows and does her office well !
What poignant oppositions she combines !
Death fosters life that life may suckle death.
Her certainties are snares, her dreams prevail.
What little seeds she grows into huge fates,
Proves with a smile her great things to be small !
All things here secretly are right; all's wrong
In God's appearances. World, thou art wisely led
In a divine confusion.

Alurca

The Minister
Watches this man so closely, he must think
There is some dangerous purpose in his mind.

Vasuntha

He is the wariest of all ministers
And would suspect two pigeons on a roof
Of plots because they coo.

Alurca

All's possible.

Vuthsa enters with Gopālaca.

Vuthsa

Yes, I would love to see the ocean's vasts.
Are they as grand as are the mountains dumb
Where I was born and grew ? Or is its voice
Like the huge murmur of our forests swayed
In the immense embrace of giant winds ?
We have that in Cowsâmbie.

Gopālaca

Wilt thou show
Them to me, Vindhya's crags, where forests dimly
Climb down towards my Avunthie?

Vuthsa

We will go
And hunt together the swift fleeing game
Or with our shafts unking the beast of prey.

Gopālaca

If we could range alone wide solitudes,
Not soil them with our din, not with our tread
Disturb great Nature in her animal trance,
Her life of mighty instincts where no stir
Of the hedged restless mind has spoiled her vasts.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Vuthsa

It is a thing I have dreamed of. Alurca, tell
The Minister that we go to hunt the deer
In Vindhya's forests on Avunthie's verge.
That's if my will's allowed.

Alurca goes out to the outer palace.

Vasuntha

He will, Vuthsa,
Allow thy will. Where does it lead thee, king ?

Vuthsa

A scourge for thee or a close gag might help.

Vasuntha

A bandage for my eyes would serve as well.

Vuthsa

Shall we awaken in Alurca's hands
The living voices of the harp ? Or will'st thou
That I should play the heaven-taught airs thou lov'st
On the Gundharva's magical guitar
Which lures even woodland beasts ? For the elephant
Comes trumpeting to the enchanted sound,
A coloured blaze of beauty on the sward
The peacocks dance and the snake's brilliant hood
Lifts rhythm'd yearning from the emerald herb.

Gopālaca

Vuthsa Udayan, suffer me awhile
To walk alone, for I am full of thoughts.

Vuthsa

Thou shouldst not be. Cannot my love atone
For lost Avunthie ?

Gopālaca

Always; but a voice
Comes to me often from the haunts of old.

Vasuntha

Returns no dim cloud-messenger to whisper
To thy great father's longing waiting heart
Far from his banished son ?

Gopālaca

Thy satire's forced.

Vasuntha

Thy earnest less ?

Vuthsa

One hour, a long pale loss,
I sacrifice to thy thoughts. When it has dragged past,
Where shall I find thee ?

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Gopālaca

Where the flowers rain
Beneath the red boughs on the river's bank.
There will I walk while thou hearst harp or verse.

Vuthsa

Without thee neither harp nor verse can charm.

Gopālaca goes.

The harmony of kindred souls that seek
Each other on the strings of body and mind,
Is all the music for which life was born.
Vasuntha, let me hear thy happy crackling,
Thou fire of thorns that leapest all the day !
Spring, call thy cuckoo.

Vasuntha

Give me fuel then,
Your green young boughs of folly for my fire.

Vuthsa

I give enough I think for all the world.

Vasuntha

It is your trade to occupy the world.
Men have made kings that folly might have food,
For the court gossips over them while they live
And the world gossips over them when they are dead.
That they call history. But our man returns.

Alurca

Do here and in all things, says the minister,
Thy pleasure. But since upon a dangerous verge
This hunt will tread, thy cohorts armed shall keep
The hilly intervals, himself be close
To guard with vigilance his monarch's life
Against the wild beasts and what else means harm.

Vuthsa

That is his care; what he shall do, is good.

Alurca

To lavish upon all men love and trust
Shows the heart's royalty, not the brain's craft.

Vuthsa

I have found my elder brother. Grudge me not,
Alurca, that delight. Thou lov'st me well ?

Alurca

Is it now questioned ?

Vuthsa

Then rejoice with me
That I have found my brother, joy in my joy,
Love with my love, think with my thoughts; the rest
Leave to much older wiser men whose schemings
Have made God's world an office and a mart.
We who are young, let us indulge our hearts.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Alurca

Thou takest all hearts and givest thine to none,
Udayan. Yet is this prince Gopâlaca,
This breed from Titans and from Mahasegu,
Hard, stern, reserved. Does he repay thy friendship
As we do ?

Vuthsa

Love itself is sweet enough
Though unreturned; and there are silent hearts.

Vasuntha

Suffer this flower to climb its wayside rock.
Oppose not Nature's cunning who will not
Be easily refused her artist joys.
Fierce deserts round the green oasis yearn
And the chill lake desires the lily's pomp.

Vuthsa

He is the rock, I am the flower. What part
Playst thou in the woodland ?

Vasuntha

A thorn beneath the rose
That from the heavens of desire was born
And men call Vuthsa.

Vuthsa

Poet, satirist, sage,
What other gifts keepst thou concealed within
More than the many that thy outsides show ?

Vasuntha

I squander all and keep none, not like thee
Who trad'st in honey to deceive the world.

Vuthsa

O, earth is honey; let me taste her all.
Our rapture here is short before we go
To other sweetness on some rarer height
Of the upclimbing tiers that are the world.

SCENE 2

A forest-glade in the Vindhya hills:

Vicurna ; a Captain.

Vicurna

The hunt rings distant still ; but all the way ,
Troops and more troops besiege. Where is Gopâlaca ?

Captain

Our work may yet be rude before we reach
Our armies on the frontier.

Vicurna

That I desire.
O whistling of the arrows ! I have yet
To hear that battle music.

Captain

Someone comes,
For wild things scurry forth.

They take cover. Gopâlaca enters.

Vicurna

Whither so swiftly ?
You are near the frontier for a banished man,
Gopâlaca.

Gopālaca

Why has my father sent
Thy rash hot boyhood here, imperilling
Both of his sons ? I find not here his wisdom.

Vicurna

There will be danger ? I am glad. None sent me;
I came unasked:

Gopālaca

And also unasking ?

Vicurna

Right.

Gopālaca

Trust me to have thee whipped. But since thou art here !
Where stand the chariots ?

Captain

On our left they wait
Screened by the secret tunnel which the Boar
Tusked through the hill to Avunthie. Torches ready
And men in arms stand in the cavern ranked
They call the cavern of the Elephant
By giants carved. But all the forest passages
The enemy guards.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Gopālaca

There are some he cannot guard.
I know the forest better than their scouts.
When I shall speak of you and clap my hands,
Surround us in a silence armed.

Captain

His men

Resisting ?

Gopālaca

No, we two shall be alone.

Vicurna

Fie ! there will be no fighting ?

Gopālaca

Goblin, off !

*They take cover again. Gopālaca
goes ; then arrives from another side
Vuthsa with Vasuntha and Alurca.*

Alurca

We lose our escort !

Vasuntha

They lose us, I think.

Alurca

What fate conspires with what hid treachery ?
Our chariot broken, we in woods alone
And the night close.

Vasuntha

Roomunwath guards the paths.

Alurca

The night is close.

Vuthsa

Here I will rest, my friends,
Where all is green and silent; only the birds
And the wind's whisperings ! Go, Alurca, meet
Our comrades of the hunt; guide their vague steps
To this green-roofed refuge.

Alurca

It is the best, though bad.
I leave thee with unwarlike hands to guard.

Vasuntha

I am no fighter; it is known. Run, haste.

Alurca hastens out.

And yet for all your speed, someone will worship
Great Shiva in Avunthie. I hear a tread.

Gopālaca returns.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Vuthsa

Where wert thou all this time, Gopâlaca?

Gopâlaca

Far wandering in the woods since a white deer
Like magic beauty drew my ardent steps
Into a green entanglement.

Vasuntha

Simple !
You found there what you sought ?

Gopâlaca

No deer, but hunters,
Not of our troop. We spoke of this green glade
Where many wandering paths might lead the king.
In haste I came.

Vasuntha

Greater the haste to go !

Vuthsa

Follow Alurca and come back with him.

Vasuntha

What, cast myself into the forest's hands
To wander and be eaten by the night ?
Come here and bid me then a long farewell.

Are thy eyes open at least ? Is it thou in this
Who movest ? Come, I should know that from thee,
If nothing more.

Vuthsa

Why ask when thou hast eyes ?
Thou seest that mine are open and I walk;
For no man drives me.

Vasuntha

Walk ! but far away
From thy safe capital.

Vuthsa

What harm ?

Vasuntha

And with
This prince Gopâlaca ?

Vuthsa

Suspicious then ?
Why not suspect at once it is my will
To visit Avunthie ?

Vasuntha

So ?

Vuthsa

Not so, but if ?

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Vasuntha

Oh, if ! And if return were much less easy
Than the going ?

Vuthsa

Who has talked of easy things ?
With difficulty then I will return.

Vasuntha

I go, king Vuthsa.

Vuthsa

But tell Yougundharâyan
And all who harbour blind uneasy thoughts,
' Whatever seeks me from Fate, man or god,
Leave all between me and the strength that seeks.
War shall not sound without thy prince's leave.
Vuthsa will rescue Vuthsa."

Vasuntha

I will tell,
But know not if he'll hear.

Vuthsa

He knows who is
His sovereign.

Vasuntha

King, farewell.

Vuthsa

I shall. Farewell.

Vasuntha disappears in the forest.

We two have kept our tryst, Gopâlaca.
Hang there, my bow; lie down, my arrows. Now
Of you I have no need. O this, O this
Is what I often dreamed, to be alone
With one I love far from the pomp of courts,
Not ringed with guards and anxious friendships round,
Free like a common man to walk alone
Among the endless forest silences,
By gliding rivers and over deciduous hills,
In every haunt where earth, our mother, smiles
Whispering to her children. Let me rest awhile
My head upon thy lap, Gopâlaca,
Before we plunge into this emerald world.
Shall we not wander in her green-roofed house
Where mighty Nature hides herself from men,
And be the friends of the great skyward peaks
That call us by their silence, bathe in tarns,
Dream where the cascades leap, and often spend
Slow moonless nights inarmed in leafy huts
Happier than palaces, or in our mood
Wrestle with the fierce tiger in his den
Or chase the deer with wind-swift feet, and share
With the rough forest-dwellers natural food
Plucked from the laden bounty of the trees,
Before we seek the citied haunts of men?
Shall we not do these things, Gopâlaca ?

Gopâlaca

Some day we shall.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Vuthsa

Why some day ? why not now ?
Have I escaped my guards in vain ?

Gopālaca

Not vainly.

Vuthsa

This sword encumbers; take it from me, friend,
And fling it there upon the bank.

Gopālaca

It is far.
I keep my arms lest some wild thing invade
These green recesses.

Vuthsa

Keep thy arms and me.
O, this is good to be among the trees
With thee to guard me and no soul besides.

Gopālaca

Thyself thou hast given wholly into my hands.

Vuthsa

Yes, take me, brother.

Gopālaca

I shall use the trust
And yet deserve it.

Vuthsa

I love thee well, Gopâlaca.
How dost thou love me ?

Gopâlaca

It was hard to speak,
Now I can tell it. As a brother might
Elder and jealous, as a mother loves
Her beautiful flower-limbed boy or grown man yearns
Over some tender girl, his sister, comrade, child,
In all these ways, but many more besides,
But always jealously.

Vuthsa

Why ?

Gopâlaca

Because, Vuthsa,
I'd have thee for my own and not as in
Thy city where a thousand shared thy rays
Who were strangers to me. In my own domain,
Part of a world that's old and dear to me,
Where thou shalt be no king, but Vuthsa only
And I can bind with many dearest ties
Heaped on thee at my will. This, Vuthsa, I desired
And therefore I have brought thee to this glade.

Vuthsa

And therefore I have come to thee alone.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Gopālaca

Thou must go farther.

Vuthsa

Yes ? Then haste. Was that
A clank of arms amid the silent trees?

*He makes as if to rise, but
Gopālaca restrains him.*

Gopālaca

Thy escort.

Vuthsa

Mine ?

Gopālaca

My father sends for thee.
I seize upon thee, Vuthsa, thou art mine,
My captive and my prize. I'll bear thee far
As Heaven's great eagle bore thy mother once
Rapt to his unattainable high hills.

As he speaks the armed men appear.

Swift, captain, swift ! I hold the royal boy.
On to the tunnel of the Boar.

Captain

Haste, haste !
There is a growing rumour all around.

Gopālaca

Care not for that, but follow me and guard.

*They disappear among the trees.
After a few moments Vasuntha
arrives.*

Vasuntha

The forest lives with sound. It is too late.
The thing is done.

*Yougundharāyan, Roomunwath, Alurca
and others break in from all sides.*

Yougundharāyan

Where is King Vuthsa ? where ?
His bow hangs there ! his sword and arrows lie !

Vasuntha

(indifferently)

I know not.

Alurca

Know not ! Thou wast with him !

Vasuntha

No.

He sent me from him. I think he's travelling
To Shiva in Avunthie.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Alurca

Untimely jester !
And thou laugh'st ?

Yougundharāyan

Impetuously pursue !
The forest ways and mountain openings flood
That flee to Avunthie. They can yet be seized.

Vasuntha

Hear first king Vuthsa's message and command :
"Whatever seeks me from Fate, man or beast,
Let not war sound without thy prince's leave.
Vuthsa will rescue Vuthsa."

Roomunwath

Jestest thou yet,
Or was this madness ? or careless levity ?

Yougundharāyan

See how the lion's cub breaks out, Roomunwath,
Whom we so guarded in our close control,
To measure with the large and dangerous world
The bounding rapture of his youth and force.
He throws himself into his foeman's lair
Alone and scorning every aid. I guess
His purpose, but it's rash, it's rash. What if
He failed ? This boy and iron Mahasegu !
And yet we must obey.

Roomunwath

He is not yet
Beyond the borders. But we'll seek him out
Armed in Avunthie. To the border speed !
They may be seized before they cross it still.

*All depart in a tumult of haste
except Yougundharāyan and Alurca.*

Yougundharāyan

It will be vain. At least my spies shall pierce
Their inmost chambers, even in his prison
My help be near.

SCENE 3

Avunthie, a wooded hill-side overlooking the plain.

*Gopālaca in a chariot with Vuthsa ;
armed men surround them.*

Gopālaca

Arrest our wheels. Those are our army's lights
That climb to us like fireflies from the plain.

Vuthsa

(awakened from sleep)

Is this Avunthie ?

Gopālaca

We have passed her bounds.

Vuthsa

So, thou dear traitor, this thou from the first
Cam'st planning ?

Gopālaca

This and more for which it was done.

Vuthsa

Thou bearest me to thy father's house ?

Gopālaca

Where thou
Shalt lie a jewel guarded carefully
Close to the dearest treasures of our house,

Nor all Yougundharâyan's wiles prevail
To take thee from our guard.

Vuthsa

I must be cooped,
It seems, and guarded in a golden cage,
As I was watched in Cowsâmbie once.
So all men think to do their will with me.
But now I warn you all that I will have
My freedom and will do my own dear will
By fraud or violence greater than your own.

Gopālaca

Thou never ! If thou hadst thy bow indeed !

Vuthsa

Thou hadst me for the taking. I will break out
As easily.

Gopālaca

Thou shalt find the evasion hard,
Such keepers shall enring thy steps.

Vuthsa

But I will,
And carry with me something costlier far
Than what thou stealest from Cowsâmbie's realm.
For I will have revenge.

Gopālaca

No wealth we have
More precious than the thing I seize today.
Therefore thy boast is vain.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Vuthsa

That I will see.

Vicurna passes.

Was't not thy brother rode behind our car ?
He passes now ; call him.

Gopālaca

Vicurna, here !

Vuthsa

Come near, embrace me, brother of Gopālaca,
Loved for his sake, now for thy own desired
Since I beheld thee, son of Mahasegu.

Vicurna

Vuthsa Udayan, in the battle's front
I had hoped to meet thee and compel thy praise
As half thy equal in the fight. But this
Is nearer, this is better.

Vuthsa

Thou art fair to see.
Thy father has two noble sons. Are there
No others of your great upspringing stock ?

Gopālaca

Only a sister.

Vuthsa

The world has heard of her.

Gopālaca

Thou shalt behold.

Vuthsa

Oh, then, it is all gain
That awaits me in Avunthie. O the night
With all her glorious stars and from the trees
Millions of shrill cigalas peal one note,
A thunderous melody ! Shall we be soon
In the golden city ? But it will be night
And I shall hardly see her famous fanes.

Gopālaca

Dawn will have passed overtaking in her skies
Our chariots long before Ujjayinie's seen.
The vanguard nears ; make haste to join with them.
Roomunwath's cohorts should tread close behind.

Vuthsa

They will not come. My fate must ride with me
Unhindered to Ujjayinie.

Gopālaca

Captains, march.
Spur towards my father swift-hooved messengers
To cry aloud to him the prize we bring.
Shiva has smiled on us.

Vuthsa

Vishnu on me.
Vicurna, mount by us and talk to me.

ACT III

AVUNTHIE; IN THE PALACE

SCENE I

*A room in the royal apartments.
Mahasegu; Ungāricā.*

Mahasegu

I conquer still though not with glorious arms.
He's seized ! the young victorious Vuthsa's mine
A prisoner in my hands.

Ungāricā

(laughing)

Thou holdst the sun
Under thy armpit as the tailed god did.
What wilt thou do with it ?

Mahasegu

Make it my moon
And shine by him upon the eastern night.

Ungāricā

Thou canst ?

Mahasegu

Loved sceptic of my house, I can.
Have I not done all things I longed for yet

Since out of thy dim world I dragged thee alarmed
Into our sun and breeze and azure skies
By force, my fortune ?

Ungāricā

Yes, by force; but here
By force it was not done. Wilt thou depart
From thy own nature, Chunda Mahasegu,
And hop'st for victory ?

Mahasegu

Thou art my strength, my fortune,
But not my counsellor.

Ungāricā

No, I obey and watch.
It is enough for me in your strange world.
For by your light I cannot guide myself.
Man is a creature, blinded by the sun,
Who errs by vision ; but the world to you
That's darkness, they who walk there, they have sight.
Such am I ; for the shades have reared my soul.

Mahasegu

What dost thou see ?

Ungāricā

That Vuthsa is too great
For thy greatness, too cunning for thy cunning ; he
Will bend not to thy pressure.

Mahasegu

Thou hast bent,
The Titaness ! this is a tender boy
As soft as summer dews or as the lily
That yields to every gentle pushing wave.
A hero ? yes ; all Aryan boys are that.

Ungāricā

Thy daughter, Vāsavaduttâ, is the wave
That shall o'erflow this lily !

Mahasegu

Thou hast seen ?

Ungāricā

'Tis good ; it is the thing my heart desires.
My daughter shall have empire.

Mahasegu

No, thy son.

Ungāricā

No matter which. The first man of the age
Will occupy her heart ; the pride and love
That are her faults will both be satisfied.
She will be happy.

Mahasegu

Call her here, my queen.
She shall be taught the thing she has to do.

Ungāricā

Her heart will teach her. Veena, call to me
The princess.

Mahasegu

O, the heart, it is a danger,
A madness. Let the thinking mind prevail.

Ungāricā

We're women, king.

Mahasegu

No, princesses. My daughter
Has dignity, pride, wisdom, noble hopes.
She will not act as common natures do.

Ungāricā

Love will unseat them all and put them down
Under his flower-soft feet.

Mahasegu

Thou hast chosen ever
To oppose my thoughts.

Ungāricā

It is their poor revenge
Who in their acts must needs obey. Thy lesson, King !

*Vāsavaduttā enters and bows down to
her parents.*

Let royal wisdom teach a woman's brain
To use for statecraft's ends her dearest thoughts.

Mahasegu

My daughter, Vāsavaduttâ, my delight,
Now is thy hour to pay the long dear debt
Thou ow'st thy parents from whom thou wast made.
Hear me ; thy brain is quick, will understand.
Vuthsa, Cowsâmbie's king, my rival, foe,
My fate's high stumbling-block, captive today
Comes to Avunthie. I mean that he shall be
Thy husband, Vāsavaduttâ, and thy slave.
By thee he must become, who now resists,
My vassal even as other monarchs are.
Then shall thy father's fates o'erleap their bounds,
Then rule thy house, thy nation all this earth !
This is my will ; my daughter, is it thine ?

Vāsavaduttâ

Father, thy will is mine, even as 'tis fate's.
Thou givest me to whom thou wilt ; what share
In this have I but only to obey ?

Mahasegu

A greater part that makes thee my ally
And golden instrument ; for without thee
I have no hold on Vuthsa. Thou, my child,
Must be the chain to bind him to my throne,
Thou my ambassador to win his mind
And thou my viceroy over his subject will.

Vāsavaduttā

Will he submit to this ?

Mahasegu

Yes, if thou choose.

Vāsavaduttā

I choose, my father, since it is thy will.
That thou shouldst rule the world is all my wish,
My nation's greatness is my dearest good.

Mahasegu

Thou hast kept my lessons ; lose them not.
O thou art not as common natures are ;
Thou wilt not put thy own ambitions first,
Nor justify a blind and clamorous heart.

Vāsavaduttā

My duty to my country and my sire
Shall rule me.

Mahasegu

I'll not teach thy woman's tact
How it should mould this youth nor warn thy will
Against the passions of the blood. The heart
And senses over common women rule ;
Thou hast a mind.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Vāsavaduttā

Father, this is my pride,
That thou ennoblest me to be an engine
Of thy great fortunes ; that alone I am.

Mahasegu

Thou wilt not yield then to the heart's desire ?

Vāsavaduttā

Let him desire, but I will nothing yield.
I am thy daughter ; greatest kings should sue
And take my grace as an unhoped-for joy.

Mahasegu

Thou art my pupil ; statecraft was not wasted
Upon thy listening brain. Thou seest, my queen ?

Ungāricā

Thou hast made thy treaty with thy daughter, King ?
As if this babe could understand ! Go, go
And leave me with my child. For I will speak to her
Another language.

Mahasegu

But no breath against
My purpose.

Ungāricā

Fearst thou that ?

Mahasegu

No; speak to her.

He goes out from the chamber.

Ungāricā

(drawing Vāsavaduttā into her arms)

Rest here, my child, to whom another bosom
Will soon be refuge. Thou hast heard the King,
Hear now thy mother. Thou wilt know, my bliss,
The fiercest sweet ordeal that can seize
A woman's heart and body. O my child,
Thou wilt house fire, thou wilt see living gods;
And all thou hast thought and known will melt away
Into a flame and be reborn. What now
I speak, thou dost not understand, but wilt
Before many nights have kept thy sleepless eyes.
My child, the flower blooms for its flowerhood only
And not to make its parent bed more high.
Not for thy sire thy mother brought thee forth,
But thy dear nature's growth and heart's delight
And for a husband and for children born.
My child, let him who clasps thee be thy god
That thou mayst be his goddess; let your wedded arms
Be heaven; let his will be thine and thine
Be his, his happiness thy regal pomp.
O Vāsavaduttā, when thy heart awakes
Thou shalt obey thy sovereign heart, nor yield
Allegiance to the clear-eyed selfish gods.
Do now thy father's will; the god awake
Shall do his own. Yes, tremble and yet fear
Nothing. Thy mother watches over thee, child.

*She puts Vāsavaduttā
from her and goes out.*

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Vāsavaduttā

I love her best, but do not understand :
My mind can always grasp my father's thoughts. ♣
If I must wed, it shall be one I rule.
Vuthsa ! Vuthsa Udayan ! I have heard
Only a far-flung name. What is the man ?
A flame? A flower ? High like Gopâlaca
Or else some golden fair and soft-eyed youth ?
I have a fluttering in my heart to know.

SCENE 2

The same.

Mahasegu ; Ungāricā ; Gopālaca ; Vuthsa.

Gopālaca

King of Avunthie, Chunda Mahasegu,
Thy will I have performed. Thy dangerous foe,
The boy who rivalled thy ripe victor years
I lay, thy captive, at thy feet.

Mahasegu

Gopālaca,
Thou hast done well; thou art indeed my son.
Vuthsa,—

Vuthsa

Hail, monarch of the West. We have met
In equal battle; it has pleased me now to approach
Thy greatness otherwise.

Mahasegu

Pleased thee, vain youth !
No, but thy fate indignant that thou strovest
Against much prouder fortunes.

Vuthsa

Think it so.
I am here. What wouldst thou with me, King, or wherefore
Hast thou by violence brought me to thy house ?

Mahasegu

To adore me as sole master, king and lord,
Assuming my great yoke as all have done
From Indus to the South.

Vuthsa

Thou art in error.
Thou hast not great Cowsâmbie's monarch here,
But Vuthsa only, Sathaneka's son,
Who sprang from sires divine.

Mahasegu

And where then dwells
Cowsâmbie's youthful majesty if not
In thee, its golden vessel ?

Vuthsa

Where my throne
In high Cowsâmbie stands. Thou shouldst know that.
There is a kingship which exceeds the king;
For Vuthsa unworthy, Vuthsa captive, slain,
This is not captive, this cannot be slain.
It far transcends our petty human forms,
It is a nation's greatness. That, O king,
Was once Parikshit, that Urjoona's seed,
Janaméjaya, that was Sathaneka,
That Vuthsa; and when Vuthsa is no more,
That shall live deathless in a hundred kings.

Mahasegu

Thou speakest like the unripe boy thou seemst,
With thoughts high-winged; grown minds keep to earth's

More humble sureness and prefer to touch.
I am content to have thy gracious body here,
This earth of kingship; for with that I deal
And not with any high and formless¹ thought.

Vuthsa

My body ! deal with it. It is thy slave
And captive by thy choice, as by my own.
What thou canst do with Vuthsa, do, O king.
In nothing will I pledge Cowsâmbie's majesty,
But Vuthsa is thy own and in thy hands.
Him I defend not from thy iron will.

Mahasegu

My prisoner, thou canst not so escape
My purpose.

Vuthsa

I embrace it. If escape
I simply meant, I should not now be here.
'Tis not by bars or gates I can be bound.

Mahasegu

But I will give thee other jailors, boy,
Surer than my armed sentries, against whom
Thou dar'st not lift thy helpless hands.

Vuthsa

Find such,

I am content.

unseen

Mahasegu

Humble thy bearing proud!
Be Vuthsa or be great Cowsâmbie's king,
Thou art here my captive only and my slave.

Vuthsa

I accept thy stern rebuke as I accept
Whatever state the wiser gods provide
And bend my mood and action to their thought.

Mahasegu

Vuthsa, thou hast opposed my sovereign will
Who meant to make all lands my private plot,
Fields for my royal tilling. Thou hast fought
And that by war I could not tame thee, hold
As thy most unexampled glory. Now
My proud resistless fortune brings thee here;
Thou must, young hero, brook enslaved my will.
Thou knowst the law; whoever offers empire
A sacrifice to the high-seated gods,
Him must his subject kings as menials serve;
And this compelled have many proud lords done
Whose high beginnings disappear in Time.
But now I will make all my royal days
A high continual solemn sacrifice of kingship.
Thee, who art Bharuth's heir, a high-throned son
Of emperors and my equal in the world,
All thy long time I will superbly keep
Ornament and emblem of my arrogant greatness,
A royal serf of my proud house. Thee, Vuthsa,
As fitting thy yet tender years, I make

My daughter's servant, by her handmaidens
Guarded, thy jailors firm whose gracious cordon
Not even thy courage can transgress. To this
Dost thou consent ?

Vuthsa

Not only I consent,
But welcome with a proud aspiring mind,
Since to be Vâsavaduttâ's servitor
Is honour, happiness and fortune's grace.
My greatness this shall raise, not cast it down,
King Mahasegu.

Mahasegu

Lead then, Gopâlaca,
My gift, this captive, to thy sister's feet.
He has a music that desires the gods,
A brush that outdoes Nature and a song
The luminous choristers of heaven have taught.
All this she can command or she can take;
For all he has, is hers. Thou smilest, boy ?

Vuthsa

What thou hast said is simply truth. And yet
I smiled to see how strong and arrogant minds
Dream themselves masters of the things they do.

*Gopâlaca and Vuthsa go out by
a door leading inward to Vâsava-
duttâ's apartments.*

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Mahasegu

'Tis only a charming boy, Ungâricâ,
Who vaunts and yields !

Ungâricâ

What he has shown thee, King
Thou seest.

Mahasegu

Wilt thou lend next this graceful child,
Almost a girl in beauty, thoughts profound
And practised subtleties ? I have done well,
Was deeply inspired.

*He goes from the chamber towards
the outer palace.*

Ungâricâ

(looking after him)

For him thou hast and her.
Our own ends seeking Heaven's ends we serve.

SCENE 3

A room in Vāsavaduttā's apartments.

Vāsavaduttā ; Munjoolicā ; Umbā.

Vāsavaduttā

Thou hast seen him ?

Munjoolicā

Yes.

Vāsavaduttā

Then speak, thou perverse silence
Thou canst chatter when thou wilt.

Munjoolicā

What shall I say

Except that thou art always fortunate
Since thou hast deigned to bless the earth,¹
O living Luxmie? Beauty, wealth and joy
Run overpacked into thy days, and grandeurs
Unmeasured. Now the greatest king on earth
Is given thy servant.

Vāsavaduttā

That's the greatest king's
High fortune and not mine. For nothing now

¹ Since first thy soft feet moved on our earth

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Can raise me higher than I am whose father
Is sovereign over greatest kings. Nothing are these
And what I long to know thou wilt not tell.
What is he like ?

Munjoolicā

I have seen the god of love
Wearing a golden human body.

Vāsavaduttā

(with a pleased smile)

So fair ?

Munjoolicā

As thou art and even more.

Vāsavaduttā

More !

Munjoolicā

Cry not out.
His eyes are proud and smiling like the gods',
His voice is like the sudden call of Spring.

Vāsavaduttā

O dear to me even as myself, wear this.

She puts her own chain round her neck.

Munjoolicā

That is my happiness ; keep thy gifts.

Vāsavaduttā

Think them

My love around thy neck. Thou hast seen truly ?
It was not spoken to beguile my mind ?
Then tell me all you saw there, dearest one ;
Not that these things I care for, but would know.

Munjoolicā

(*showing Gopālaca and Vuthsa who enter*)

(Let thy eyes care not then, yet see.)

Vāsavaduttā

My brother,
Long wast thou far from me.

Gopālaca

For thy sake I was far.
Much have I flung, my sister, at thy feet
Nor thought my gifts were worthy of thy smile,
Not even Sourashtra's conquered daughter here,
But now I give indeed. This is that famous
Vuthsa Udayan, great Cowsâmbie's King,
Brought here by me to serve thee as thy slave
Thy royal serf, musician, singer, page.
Look on him, tell me if I have deserved.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Vāsavaduttā

Much love, dear brother, not that any prize
I value as of worth for such as we,
But thy love gives it price.

Gopālaca

My love for both.
My gift is precious to me, for my heart
Possessed him long before my hands have seized.
Then love him well, for so thou lov'st me twice.

Vāsavaduttā

(looking covertly at Vuthsa)

Although my slave, dear then and prized.

Gopālaca

Are we not all
Thy servants ? The wide costly world is less,
My sister, than thy noble charm and grace
And beauty and the sweetness of thy soul
Deserve, O Vāsavaduttā.

Vāsavaduttā

Is it so ?

Gopālaca

My sister, thou wast born from Luxmie's heart.
And we thy brothers feel in thee, not us,

Our father's lordly star inherited
And in thy girdle all the conquered earth.

Vāsavaduttā

I know it, brother.

Gopālaca

From thy childhood, yes,
Thou seemdst to know, thou heldst rule carelessly ;
But since thou knowest, queen, assume thy fiefs,
Cowsâmbie and Ayodhyâ, for thy house !

Vāsavaduttā

(glancing at Vuthsa and avoiding his gaze)

Since he's my slave, they are already mine.

Gopālaca

Nay, understand me, sister : make them thine.
Thou, Vuthsa, serve thy mistress and obey.

He goes out.

Vāsavaduttā

He is a boy, a golden marvellous boy.
I am surely older ! I can play with him.
There is no fear, no difficulty at all.

(to Vuthsa)

What is thy name ? I'll hear it from thy lips.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Vuthsa

Vuthsa.

Vāsavaduttā

Thou shudderest, Vuthsa ; dost thou fear ?

Vuthsa

Perhaps ; there is a fear in too much joy.

Vāsavaduttā

(smiling)

I did not hear. My brother loves thee well.
Take comfort. If thou serve me faithfully,
Thou hast no cause for any grief at all.
Thou art Cowsâmbie's king,—

Vuthsa

Men call me so.

Vāsavaduttā

And now my servant.

Vuthsa

That my heart repeats.

Vāsavaduttā

(smiling)

I did not hear. Cowsâmbie's king, my slave,
What canst thou do to please me ?

Vuthsa

Dost thou choose
To know the songs that shake the tranquil gods
Or hear on earth the harps of heaven ? dost thou
Desire the line and hue of living truth
That makes earth's shadows pale ? or wilt thou have
The infinite abysmal silences
Made vocal, clothed with form ? These things at birth
The Kinnarie, Vidyâdhar and Gundharva
Around me crowding on Himâloy dumb
Gave to the silent god that smiled in me
Before my outer mind held thought. All these
I can make thine.

Vāsavaduttā

Vuthsa, I take all these,
All thy life's ornaments that thou wearst, for mine
And am not satisfied.

Vuthsa

Dost thou desire
The earth made thine by my victorious bow ?
Send me then forth to battle ; earth is thine.

Vāsavaduttā

I take the earth and am not satisfied.

Vuthsa

Say thou what thing shall please thee in thy slave,
What thou desir'st from Vuthsa ?

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Vāsavaduttā

Do I know ?
Not less than all thou hast and all thou canst
And all thou art.

Vuthsa

All's thine.

Vāsavaduttā

I speak and hear,
And know not what I say nor what thou meanst.

Vuthsa

The deepest things are those thought seizes not ;
Our spirits live their hidden meaning out.

Vāsavaduttā

*(after a troubled silence in which
she tries to recover herself)*

I know not how we passed into this strain.
Such words are troubling to the mind and heart ;
Leave them.

Vuthsa

They have been spoken.

Vāsavaduttā

Let them rest.

Vuthsa, my slave, who promisest me much,
Great things thou offerest, small things I'll demand
From thee, yet hard. Since he's my prisoner,
Munjoolicâ and Umbâ, guard this boy ;
You are his jailors. When I have need of him,
Then bring him to me. Go, Vuthsa, to thy room.

*Vuthsa makes an obeisance and
touches her feet.*

What dost thou ? It is not permitted thee.

Vuthsa
(letting his touch linger)

Not this ? 'Tis hard.

Vāsavaduttā
(troubled)

Thou art too bold a slave.

Vuthsa

Let me be earth beneath thy tread at least.

Vāsavaduttā

Oh, take him from me ; I have enough of him !
Thou, Umbâ, see he bribes thee not or worse.

Umbā

I will be bribed to make thee smart for that.
Where shall we put him ? In the tower-room
Closing the terrace where thou walkst when moonlight
Sleeps on the sward ?

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Vāsavaduttā

There ; 'tis the nearest.

Umbā

(taking Vuthsa's hand)

Come.

They go out with Vuthsa.

Vāsavaduttā

Will he charm me from my purpose with a smile ?
How beautiful he is, how beautiful !
There is a fear, there is a happy fear.
But he is mine, his eyes confessed my sway ;
Surely I shall do all my will with him.
I sent him from me, for his words troubled me
And still delighted. They have a witchery,—
No, not his words, but voice. 'Tis not his voice,
Nor yet his smile, his face, his flower-soft eyes
And yet it is all these and something more.

(shaking her head)

I fear it will be difficult after all.

SCENE 4

The tower-room beside the terrace.

Vuthsa on a couch.

Vuthsa

All that I dreamed or heard of her, her charm
Exceeds. She's mine ! she has shuddered at my touch ;
Thrice her eyes faltered as they gazed in mine.

*He lies back with closed eyes ;
Munjoolicā enters and contemplates him.*

Munjoolicā

O golden Love ! thou art not of this earth.
He too is Vāsavaduttā's ! All is hers,
As I am now and one day all the earth.
Vuthsa, thou sleep'st not, then.

Vuthsa

Sleep jealous waits
Finding another image in my eyes.

Munjoolicā

Thou art disobedient. Wast thou not commanded
To sleep at once ?

Vuthsa

Sleep disobeys, not I.
But thou too wakest, yet no thoughts should have
To keep thy lids apart.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Munjoolicā

How knowst thou that ?
I am thy jailor and I walk my rounds.

Vuthsa

Bright jailor, thou art jealous without cause.
Who would escape from heaven's golden bars ?
Thy name is Munjoolicā ? so is thy form
A bower of the graceful things of earth.

Munjoolicā

I had another name but it has ceased,
Forgotten.

Vuthsa

Thou wast then Sourashtra's child ?

Munjoolicā

I am still that royalty clouded, even as thou art
Captive Cowsâmbie. Me Gopâlaca
In battle seized, brought a disdainful gift
To Vâsavaduttâ.

Vuthsa

Since our fates are one,
Should we not be allies ?

Munjoolicā

For what bold purpose ?

Vuthsa

How knowst thou I have one ?

Munjoolicā

Were I a man !

Vuthsa

Wouldst thou have freedom ? wilt thou give me help ?

Munjoolicā

In nothing against her I love and serve.

Vuthsa

No, but conspire to serve and love her best
And make her queen of all the Aryan earth.

Munjoolicā

My payment ?

Vuthsa

Name it thyself, when all is ours.

Munjoolicā

Content; it will be large.

Vuthsa

However large.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Munjoolicā

Now shall I be avenged upon my fate.
I know what thy heart asks; too openly
Thou carriest the yearning in thy eyes.
Vuthsa, she loves thee as the half-closed bud
Thrills to the advent of a wonderful dawn
And like a dreamer half-awake perceives
The faint beginnings of a sunlit world.
Doubt not success more than that dawn must break;
For she is thine.

Vuthsa

Take my heart's gratitude
For the sweet assurance.

Munjoolicā

I am greedy. Only
Thy gratitude ?

Vuthsa

What wouldst thou have ?

Munjoolicā

Upon thy finger, Vuthsa, for my own. The ring

Vuthsa

(putting it on her finger)

It shall live happier on a fairer hand.

Munjoolicā

Since thou hast paid me instantly and well,
I will be zealous, Vuthsa, in thy cause.
But my great bribe is in the future still.

Vuthsa

Claim it in our Cowsâmbie.

Munjoolicā

There indeed.

Sleep now.

Vuthsa

By thy good help I now shall sleep.

Munjoolicā goes out.

Music is sweet; to rule the heart's rich chords
Of human lyres much sweeter. Art's sublime
But to combine great ends more sovereign still,
Accepting danger and difficulty to break
Through proud and violent opposites to our will.
Song is divine, but more divine is love.

SCENE 5

A room in Vāsavaduttā's apartments.

Vāsavaduttā

I govern no longer what I speak and do.
Is this the fire my mother spoke of ? Oh,
It is sweet, it is sweet. But I will not be mastered
By any equal creature. Let him serve
Obediently and I will load his lovely head
With costliest favours. He's my own, my own,
My slave, my toy to play with as I choose,
And shall not dare to play with me. I think he dares;
I do not know, I think he would presume.
He's gentle, brilliant, bold and beautiful.
I'll send for him and chide and put him down,
I'll chide him harshly; he must not presume.
O, I have forgotten almost my father's will,
Yet it was mine. Before I lose it quite,
I will compel a promise from the boy.
Will it be hard when he is all my own ?

(she calls)

Umbâ ! Bring Vuthsa to me from his tower.
His music is a voice that cries to me,
His songs are chains he hangs around my heart.
I must not hear them often; I forget
That I am Vāsavaduttā, that he is
My house's foe, and only Vuthsa feel,
Think Vuthsa only, while my captive heart
Beats in world-Vuthsa and on Vuthsa throbs.
This must not be.

Umbā brings in Vuthsa and retires.

Go, Umbâ. Vuthsa, stand
Before me.

Vuthsa

It is my sovereign's voice that speaks.

Vāsavaduttā

Be silent ! Lower thy eyes; they are too bold
To gaze on me, my slave.

Vuthsa

Blame not my eyes,
They follow the dumb motion of a heart
Uplifted to adore thee.

Vāsavaduttā

(with a shaken voice)

Dost thou really
Adore me, Vuthsa ?

Vuthsa

Earth's one goddess, yes.

Vāsavaduttā

(mildly)

But, Vuthsa, men adore with humble eyes
Upon their deity's feet.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Vuthsa

Oh, let me so
Adore thee then, thus humble at thy feet,
Their sleeping moonbeams in my eyes, and place
My hands in Paradise beneath these flowers
That bless too oft the chill unheeding earth.
Let this not be forbidden to thy slave.
So let me worship, and the carolling of thy speech
So listen.

Vāsavaduttā

Vuthsa, thou must not presume.

Vuthsa

O even when faint thy voice, thy every word
Reaches my soul.

Vāsavaduttā

Wilt thou not let me free ?

Vuthsa

Yes, if thou bid; but do not.

Vāsavaduttā

(bending down to caress his hair)

If really
And as my slave thou adorest, nothing more,
I will not bid.

Vuthsa

What more, when this means all.

Vāsavaduttā

But if thou serve me, is not all thou hast
Mine, mine ? Why dost thou, Vuthsa, keep from me
My own ?

Vuthsa

Take all; claim all.

Vāsavaduttā

(collecting herself)

Cowsâmbie first.

Vuthsa

It shall be thine, a jewel for thy feet.

Vāsavaduttā

Thy kingdom, Vuthsa, for my will to rule.

Vuthsa

It shall be thine, the garden of thy pomp.

Vāsavaduttā

Shall ?

Vuthsa

Is it not far ? We must go there, my queen,
Thou to receive and I to give.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Vāsavaduttā

I wish

To be there. But, Udayan, thou must vow,
And the word bind thee, that none else shall be
Cowāmbie's queen and thou my servant live
Vowed to obedience underneath my throne.

Vuthsa

Thou only shalt be over my heart a queen,
Yes, if thou wilt, the despot of my thoughts,
My hopes, my aims, but I will not obey
If thou command disloyalty to thee,
My sweet, sole sovereign.

Vāsavaduttā

(smiling)

This reserve I yield.

(hesitatingly)

But Vuthsa, if as subject of my sire,
High Chunda Mahasegu, I bid thee rule ?

Vuthsa

My queen, it will be void.

Vāsavaduttā

Void ? And thy vow ?

Vuthsa

Would it not be disloyalty in me
To serve another sovereign ?

Vāsavaduttā

(vexed, yet pleased)

O, thou play'st with me.

Vuthsa

No, queen. What's wholly mine, that wholly take.
But this belongs to many other souls.

Vāsavaduttā

To whom ?

Vuthsa

Their names are endless. Bharuth first
Who ruled the Aryan earth that bears his name,
And great Dushyanta and Pururavus'
Famed warlike son and all their peerless line,
Urjoona and Parikshit and his sons
Whom God descended to enthrone, and all
Who shall come after us, my heirs and thine
Who chooseth me, and a great nation's multitudes,
And the Kuru ancestors and long posterity
Who all must give consent.

Vāsavaduttā

Thy thoughts are high.
But if thy life must find a prison here ?
My father is inflexible and stern.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Vuthsa

Dost thou desire this really in thy heart ?

Vuthsa diminished,¹ art thou not diminished¹ too ?

Vāsavaduttā

My rule thou hast vowed ?

Vuthsa

To obey thee in all things
Throned in Cowsâmbie, not as here I must,
Thy father's captive. There I shall be thine.

Vāsavaduttā

Leave, Vuthsa, leave me. Take him, Umbâ, from me.

Umbâ

(entering, in Vāsavaduttā's ear)

Who now is bribed ? We are all traitors now.

She goes out with Vuthsa.

Vāsavaduttā

O joy, if he and all were only mine.
O greatness to be queen of him and earth.
I grow a rebel to my father's house.

degraded

ACT IV

SCENE I

A room in the royal apartments.

Ungāricā ; Vāsavaduttā.

Ungāricā

Thou singest well ; a cry of Vuthsa's art
Has stolen into thy song.

She takes Vāsavaduttā on her lap.

Look up at me,
My daughter, let me gaze into thy eyes
And from their silence learn thy treasured thoughts.
Thou knowest I can read 'twixt human lids
The secrets of the throbbing heart ? I search
In Vāsavaduttā's eyes by what strange skill
Vuthsa has crept into my daughter's voice.
Thou keepst thy lashes lowered ? thou wilt not let me look ?
But that too I can read.

Vāsavaduttā

O mother, mother mine,
Plague me not ; thou know'st all things ; comfort me.

Ungāricā

Thou needest comfort ?

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Vāsavaduttā

Yes, against myself
Who trouble my own heart.

Ungāricā

Why ? though I know.
Thou wilt not speak ? I'll speak then for thee.

*Vāsavaduttā alarmed puts her
hand over Ungāricā's mouth.*

Off !

It is because thou canst not here control
What thy immortal part with rapture wills
And the mortal longingly desires ; for yet
Thy proud heart cannot find the way to yield.

Vāsavaduttā

If thou knew'st, mother.

Ungāricā

No, thou hast the will
But not the art, Love's learner. O my proud
Sweet ignorance, 'tis he shall find the way
And thou shalt know the joy of being forced
To what thy heart desires. Is it enough?

Vāsavaduttā

O mother !

She hides her face in Ungāricā's bosom.

Ungāricā

Thou hast done thy father's will ?
Thy husband shall be vassal to thy sire ?

Vāsavaduttā

Have I a father or a house ? O none,
O none, O none exists but only he.

Ungāricā

Let none exist for thee but the dear all thou lov'st.
I charge thee, Vāsavaduttā, when thou rul'st
In far Cowsāmbie, let this be thy reign
To heap on him delight and seek his good.
Raise his high fortunes, shelter from grief his heart,
Even with thy own tears buy his joy and peace,
Nor let one clamorous thought of self revolt
Against him.

Vāsavaduttā

Mother, thou canst see my heart ;
Is this not there ? Can it do otherwise,
Being thus conquered, even if it willed ?

Ungāricā

Child, 'tis my care to give thy heart a voice
And bind it to its nobler loving self.
Let this be now thy pride.

Vāsavaduttā

It is, it is.
But, mother, it is very sweet to rule,
And if I rule him for his good, not mine ?

Ungāricā

Thou canst not be corrected ! Queenling, rule.
Go now ; thy brother comes.

*Vāsavaduttā escapes towards her own apart-
ments ; Vicurna enters from the outer door.*

Why is thy brow

A darkness ?

Vicurna

Wherefore was King Vuthsa brought
Into Ujjayinie ? why is captive kept ?

Ungāricā

Thy father's will, who knows ?

Vicurna

But I would know.

Ungāricā

Him ask.

Vicurna

(taking her face between his hands)

I ask thee ; thou must answer.

Ungāricā

To wed

Thy sister.

Vicurna

Let him wed and be released.
Our fame is smirched ; the city murmurs. War
Threatens from Vuthsa's nation and our cause
Is evil.

Ungāricā

Wedding her he must consent
To be our vassal.

Vicurna

Thus are vassals made ?
Thus empires built ? This is a shameful thing.
Release him first, then with proud war subdue.

Ungāricā

Thou knowest thy father's stern, unbending will
Whom we must all obey.

Vicurna

Not I, or not

In evil things.

Ungāricā

Respect thy father ! He
Will not, unsatisfied, release his foe.
Demand not this.

Vicurna

I will release him then.

Ungāricā

Him by what right who is thy house's peril ?

Vicurna

He is a hero and he is my friend.

Ungāricā

Didst thou not help to bring him captive here ?

Vicurna

For Vāsavaduttâ. I will bear them both
Out from the city in my chariot far
Into the freedom of the hills. I will hew down
All who oppose me.

Ungāricā

Rash and violent boy,
So wilt thou make bad worse. Await the hour
When Vuthsa shall himself demand thy aid.

Vicurna

The hour will come ?

Ungāricā

He will be free.

VASAVADUTTA

Act Four Scene One

Vicurna

Then soon,
Or I myself will act.

He goes out.

Ungāricā

This too is well
And most that the proud chivalries of old
Are not yet dead in all men's hearts. O God
Shiva, thou mak'st me fortunate in my sons.

SCENE 2

Vāsavaduttā's chamber.

Vuthsa ; Vāsavaduttā.

Vuthsa

Thy hands have yet no cunning with the strings.
'Tis not the touch alone but manner of the touch
That calls the murmuring spirit forth,—as thus.

Vāsavaduttā

I cannot manage it ; my hand rebels.

Vuthsa

I will compel it then.

He takes her hand in his.

Thou dost not chide.

Vāsavaduttā

I am weary of chiding ; and how rule a boy
Who takes delight in being chidden ? And then
'Twas only my hand. What dost thou ?

*Vuthsa takes her by the arms and draws
her towards him.*

Vuthsa

What thy eyes
Commanded me and what for many days
My heart has clamoured for in hungry pain.

Vāsavaduttā

Presumptuous ! wilt thou not immediately
Release me ?

Vuthsa

Not till thy heart's will is done.

*He draws her down on his knees,
resisting.*

Vāsavaduttā

What will ? I did not bid. What will ? Vuthsa !
Vuthsa ! I did not bid. This is not well.

*He masters her and holds her on his
bosom. Her head falls on his shoulder.*

Vuthsa

O my desire, why should we still deny
Delight that calls to us ? Strive not with joy,
But yield me the sweet mortal privilege
That makes me equal with the happiest god
In all the heavens of fulfilled desire.
O on thy sweet averted cheek ! My queen,
My wilful empress, all in vain thou striv'st
To keep from me the treasure of thy lips
I have deserved so long.

Vāsavaduttā

Vuthsa ! Vuthsa !

He forces her lips up to his and kisses her.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Vuthsa

O honey of thy mouth ! The joy, the joy
Was sweeter. I have drunk in heaven at last,
Let what will happen.

*Vāsavaduttā escapes and stands quivering
at a distance.*

Vāsavaduttā

Stand there ! approach me not

Vuthsa

I thought 'twould be enough for many ages ;
But 'tis not so.

Vāsavaduttā

Go from me, seek thy room.

Vuthsa

Have I so much offended ? I will go.

He pretends to go.

Vāsavaduttā

Vuthsa, I am not angry ; do not go.
Sit ; I must chide thee. Was this well to abuse
My kindness, to mistake indulgence—No,
I am not angry ; thou art only a boy.
I have permitted thee to love because
Thou saidst thou couldst not help it. This again
Thou must not do,—not thus.

Vuthsa

Then teach me how.

Vāsavaduttā

(with a troubled smile)

I never had so importunate a slave.
I must think out some punishment for thee.

*She comes to him suddenly, takes him to
her bosom and kisses him with passion.*

Vuthsa

O if 'tis this, I will again offend.

*She clings to him, kisses him again,
then puts him away from her.*

Vāsavaduttā

Go from me, go. Wilt thou not go ? Munjoolicâ !

Vuthsa

She is not here to help thee against thy heart.
But I will go ; thou wilt it.

Vāsavaduttā

Wilt thou leave me ?

Vuthsa

Never ! thus, thus into my bosom grow,
O Vāsavaduttâ.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Vāsavaduttā

O my happiness !
O Vuthsa, only name that's sweet on earth
I have murmured to the silence of the hours,
Give me delight, let me endure thy clasp
For ever. O loveliest head on all the earth !

Vuthsa

If we could thus remain through many ages,
Nor Time grow weary ever of such bliss,
O Vāsavaduttā !

Vāsavaduttā

I have loved thee always
Even when I knew it not. Was't not the love
Secret between us, drew thee here by force,
Vuthsa ?

Vuthsa

Thou wilt not now refuse thy lips ?

Vāsavaduttā

Nothing to thee.

Vuthsa

Yes, thou shalt be my queen
Surrendered henceforth, I thy slave enthroned.
Give me the largess of thyself that I may be

The constant vassal of thy tyrant eyes
 And captive of thy beauty all my days
 And homage pay to thy sweet sovereign soul.
 Thus, thus accept me.

Vāsavaduttā

I accept, my king,
 Thy service and thy homage and thy love.
 If in return the bounty of myself
 I lavish on thee, will it be enough ?
 Can it hold thy life as thou wilt fill all mine ?

Vuthsa

Weave thyself into morn and noon and eve.
 We will not be as man and woman are
 Who are with partial oneness satisfied,
 Divided in our works, but one large soul
 Parted in two dear bodies for more bliss.
 For all my occupations thou shalt rule,
 And those that take me from thy blissful shadow
 Still with thy sweet remembrance shall inspired
 Be done by thee.

Vāsavaduttā

If thy heart strays from me,—

Vuthsa

Never my heart.

Vāsavaduttā

If thy eyes stray from me,

O Vuthsa,—

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Vuthsa

If I view all beautiful things
With natural delight, thou wilt pardon that,
Because thou wilt share the joy.

Vāsavaduttā

Then must I find
Thy beauty there.

Vuthsa

Tonight, my love, my love
Shall we not linger heart on heart tonight ?

Vāsavaduttā

Ah, Vuthsa, no.

Vuthsa

Does not thy heart cry, yes ?
Are we not wedded ? Shall we dally, love,
Upon heaven's outskirts, nor all Paradise
This hour compel ?

Vāsavaduttā

(faintly)

Munjoolicā !

Vuthsa

Beloved, thy eyes
Beseech me to overcome thee with my will.

*Munjoolicā entering, Vuthsa
releases Vāsavaduttā.*

Munjoolicā

Princess !

Vāsavaduttā

Munjoolicā ! Why camest thou ?

Munjoolicā

Calledst thou not ?

Vāsavaduttā

'Tis forgotten. Oh, I remember.
'Twas to lead Vuthsa to his prison. (*low*) Smile,
And I will beat thee ! It was all thy fault.

Munjoolicā

Oh, very little. Come, the hour is late;
The Princess' maidens will come trooping in.
Turn not reluctant eyes behind but come.

*She takes Vuthsa by both
wrists and leads him out.*

Vāsavaduttā

There is a fire within me and a cry.
My longings have all broken in a flood
And I am the tossed spray ! O my desire
That criest for the beauty of his limbs
And to feel all his body with thyself
And lose thy soul in his sweet answering soul,
Wilt thou not all this night be silent ? I
Will walk upon the terrace in moonlight;
Perhaps the large, silent night will give me peace
For now 'twere vain to sleep. O in his arms !
His arms about me and the world expunged !

SCENE 3

*The tower-room by the terrace.
Vuthsa asleep on a couch ; Munjoolicā.*

Munjoolicā

He sleeps and now to lure my victim here.
You ! princess ! Vāsavaduttā !

*Vāsavaduttā
(approaching at the doorway)*

Didst thou call ?

Munjoolicā

Yes, to come in from moonlight to the moon.
Thou hast never seen him yet asleep.

Vāsavaduttā

He sleeps !

Munjoolicā

His curls are pillowed on one golden arm
Like clouds upon the moon. Wilt thou not see ?

Vāsavaduttā

I dare not. I will stand here and will see.

Munjoolicā

Thou shalt not. Either pass or enter in

Vāsavaduttā

Thou playst the tyrant ? I will stand and see.

Munjoolicā

(pushing her suddenly in)

In with thee.

Vāsavaduttā

Munjoolicā !

Munjoolicā

Hush, wake him not !

She drags her to the couch-side

Is he not beautiful ?

*She draws back and after a moment
goes quietly out and closes the door.*

Vāsavaduttā

Oh, now I feel

My mother's heart when over me she bowed
Wakeful at midnight ! He has never had
Since his strange birth a mother's, sister's love.
O sleeping soul of my beloved, hear
My vow that while thy Vāsavaduttā lives,
Thou shalt not lack again one heart's desire,
One tender bodily want. All things at once,

Wife, mother, sister, lover, playmate, friend,
Queen, comrade, counsellor I will be to thee.
Self shall not chill my heart with wedded strife,
Nor age nor custom pale my fire of love.
I have that strength in me, the strength to love of gods.

*A tress of her hair falls on his
face and awakens him.*

Vuthsa

O Vāsavaduttâ, thou hast come to me !

Vāsavaduttâ

It was not I ! Munjoolicâ dragged me in.
O where is she ? The door !

*She hastens to the door and
finds it bolted from outside.*

Munjoolicâ !

What is this jest ? I shall be angry. Open.

*Munjoolicâ
(outside, solemnly)*

Bolted.

Vāsavaduttâ

For pity, sweet Munjoolicâ !

Munjoolicâ

I settle my accounts. Be happy. I
Am gone.

Vāsavaduttâ

Go not, go not, Munjoolicâ.

Vuthsa

(*coming to her*)

She's gone, the thrice-blessed mischief, and tonight
This happy prison thou gav'st me is thine too.
Goddess ! thou art shut in with thy delight.
Why wouldst thou flee then through the doors of heaven ?

Vāsavaduttā

O not tonight ! Be patient ! I will ask
My father; he will give me as thy wife.

Vuthsa

Thou thinkst I'll take thee from thy father's hands
Like a poor Brahmin begging for a dole ?
Not so do heroes' children wed, nor they
Who from the loins of puissant princes sprang.
With the free interchange of looks and hearts
Nobly self-given, heaven for the priest
And the heart's answers for the holy verse,
They are wedded or by wished-for violence torn
Consenting, yet resisting from the midst
Of many armed men. So will I wed thee,
O Vāsavaduttâ, so wilt bear by force
Out of the house and city of my foes
Breaking through hostile gates. By a long kiss
I'll seal thy lips that vainly would forbid.
Let thy heart speak instead the word of joy,
O Vāsavaduttâ.

Vāsavaduttā

Do with me what thou wilt, for I am thine.

ACT V

SCENE 1

1 room in Vāsavaduttā's apartments.

Vāsavaduttā ; Munjoolicā.

Vāsavaduttā

So thou hast dared to come.

Munjoolicā

I have. Thou, dare
To look me in the eyes! Thou canst not. Then ?

Vāsavaduttā

Hast thou no fear of punishment at all ?

Munjoolicā

For shutting thee in with heaven ? none, none at all.

Vāsavaduttā

How didst thou dare ?

Munjoolicā

How didst thou dare, proud girl,
To make of kings and princesses thy slaves ?
How dare to drag Sourashtra's daughter here,

To keep her as thy servant and to load
With gifts, caresses, chidings and commands,
The puppet of thy sweet imperious will ?
Thinkst thou my heart within me was not hot ?
But now I am avenged on thee and all.

Vāsavaduttā

Vindictive traitress, I will beat thee.

Munjoolicā

Do
And I will laugh and ask thee of the night.

Vāsavaduttā

Then take thy chastisement.

*She seizes and beats her with
the tassels of her girdle.*

Munjoolicā

Stop ! I'll bear no more.
Art not ashamed to spend thy heart in play
Knowing what thou hast done and what may come ?
Think rather of what thou wilt do against
Thy dangerous morrow.

Vāsavaduttā

See what thou hast done !
How shall I look my father in the eyes ?
What speak ? what do ? my Vuthsa how protect ?

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Munjoolicā

Thy father must not know of this.

Vāsavaduttā

Thou thinkst
My joy can be shut in from every eye ?
Besides thee I have other serving girls.

Munjoolicā

None who'd betray thee. This thing known, his wrath
Would strike thy husband.

Vāsavaduttā

Me rather. I will throw
My heart and body, twice his shield, between.

Munjoolicā

You will be torn apart and Vuthsa penned
In some deep pit or fiercer vengeance taken
To soothe the stern man's outraged heart.

Vāsavaduttā

Alas !
Thou hast a brain ; give me thy counsel. The ill
Thyself hast done, must thou not remedy ?

Munjoolicā

If thou entreat me much, I will and can.

Vāsavaduttā

I shall entreat thee !

Munjoolicā

Help thyself, proud child.

Vāsavaduttā

O, if I have thee at advantage ever !
Stay ! I beseech thee, my Munjoolicā,-

Munjoolicā

More humbly !

Vāsavaduttā

Oh !

She kneels.

I clasp thy feet, O friend,
In painful earnest I beseech thee now
To think, plan, spend for my sake all thy thought.
Remember how I soothed thy fallen life
Which might have been so hard. O thou my playmate,
Joy, servant, sister who hast always been,
Help me, save him, deceive my father's wrath,
Then ask from me what huge reward thou wilt.

Munjoolicā

Nothing at all. Vengeance is sweet enough
Upon thy father and Gopālaca.
I'm satisfied now. First give me a promise ;

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Obey me absolutely in all things
Till Vuthsa's free.

Vāsavaduttā

I promise. Thou art my guide
And I will walk religiously thy path.

Munjoolicā

Then think it done.

Vāsavaduttā

(smiling on Vuthsa who enters.)

Vuthsa, I asked not for thee.

Vuthsa

Thou didst. I heard thy heart demand me.

Munjoolicā

Hark !

What is this noise and laughter in the court ?
See, see, the hunchbacked laughable old man !
What antics !

Vuthsa

Surely I know well those eyes.
Munjoolicā, this is a friend. He must
Be brought here to me.

Munjoolicā

Princess, let us call him.
It is an admirable buffoon.

Vāsavaduttā

Fie on thee !
Is this an hour for jest and antics ?

Munjoolicā
(*looking significantly at her*)

Yes.

Vāsavaduttā

Call him.

Munjoolicā

And thou go in.

Vāsavaduttā

How, in !

Munjoolicā

This girl !
Hast thou not promised to obey me ?

Vāsavaduttā

Yes.

She goes in.
Munjoolicā descends.

Vuthsa

Yougundharâyan sends him. O, he strikes
The hour as if a god had planned all out.
This world's the puppet of a silent Will
Which moves unguessed behind our acts and thoughts ;
Events bewildered follow its dim guidance
And flock where are they needed. Is't not thus,
O Thou, our divine Master, that Thou rulest,
Nor car'st at all because Thy joy and power
Are seated in Thyself beyond the ages ?

*Munjoolicā returns bringing in
Vasuntha disguised.*

Who is this ancient shape thou bringest ?

Munjoolicā

I'd know
If he has a tongue as famous as his hump
And as preposterous ; that to learn I bring him.

Vasuntha

Where is the only lady of the age ?
Princes or else domestics,—

Munjoolicā

Something, sir, of both.

Vasuntha

O masters then of princes, think not that I scorn
Your prouder royalty ; but now if any

Will introduce my hungry old hunchback
To Avunthie's far-famed paragon of girls,
He shall have tithe of all my golden gains.

Munjoolicā

Why not to Avunthie's governor and a prison,
Yougundharâyan's spy ?

Vasuntha

(*looking at Vuthsa*)

What's this ? What's this ?

Munjoolicā

Strong tonic for a young old man.

Vuthsa

Speak freely
Thy message ; there are only friends who hear.

Vasuntha

(*to Vuthsa, with a humorous glance*)
at Munjoolicā

Thy hours were not ill-spent. But thou hast nearly
Frighted these poor young hairs to real grey,
My sportive lady. Hear now why I crouch
Beneath the hoary burden of this beard
And the insignia of a royal hump,—
And an end to jesting. Vuthsa, in thy city
The people clamour ; they besiege thy ministers,
Railing at treason and demanding thee,

Nor can their rage be stilled. Do swiftly then
Whatever thou must do yet, swiftly break forth
Or war will seek thee clamouring round these doors.
To bear thy message back to him I come,
Upon Avunthie's mountain verge who lurks,
Or else to aid thee if our help thou needest.

Vuthsa

Let him restrain my army forest-screened
Where the thick woodlands weave a border large
To the ochre garment round Avunthie's loins
Nearest Ujjayinie. Under the cavern-hill
Of Lokanâtha let him lie, but never
Transgress that margin till my chariot comes.

Vasuntha

'Tis all ?

Vuthsa

In my own strength all else I'll do.

Vasuntha

Good, then I go ?

Vuthsa

Yes, but with gold, thy fee,
To colour thy going. Bring him gold, dear friend,
Or take from Vâsavaduttâ gem or trinket
That shall bear out his mask to jealous eyes.

Munjoolicā goes into the inner chamber.

Vasuntha

Leave that to me.

Vuthsa

Thou hast adventured much
For my sake.

Vasuntha

Poor Alurca cried to come,
But this thing asked for brains and he had only
Blunt courage and a harp. The danger's nothing,
But oh, this hump ! I shall not soon walk straight,
Nor rid myself of all the loyal aches
I bear for thee.

Vuthsa

Pangs fiercer would have chased them,
Hadst thou been caught, my friend. I shall remember.

Munjoolicā returns with gold and a trinket.

Take now these gauds ; haste, make thy swiftest way,
For I come close behind thee.

Vasuntha goes.

Munjoolicā

Tell me thy plan.

Vuthsa

These chambers are too strongly kept.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Munjoolicā

But there's

The pleasure-ground.

Vuthsa

Let Vāsavaduttâ call
Her brothers on an evening to the park
And wine flow fast. The nights are moonlit now.
How many gates ?

Munjoolicā

Three, but the southern portal
Nearest the ramparts.

Vuthsa

There, how many guard ?

Munjoolicā

Three armed Kirâtha women keep the gate.

Vuthsa

I cannot hurt them. Thou must find a way.

Munjoolicā

They shall be drowned in wine. The streets outside ?

Vuthsa

A chariot,—find one for me. I cannot fight
With Vāsavaduttâ on my breast.

Munjoolicā

I think
That I shall find one.

Vuthsa

Do it. The rest is easy,
To break the keepers of the city-gate
In one fierce moment and be out and far.
There are arms enough in the palace.

Munjoolicā

The armoury
I use sometimes.

Vuthsa

Conceal them in the grounds.
No, in the chariot let them wait for me.

Munjoolicā

Thou wilt need both thy hands in such a fight.
Vuthsa, I'll be thy charioteer.

Vuthsa

Thou canst ?

Munjoolicā

Hope not to find a better in thy realms.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Vuthsa

My battle-comrade then ! Words are not needed
Between us.

He goes out.

Munjoolicā

More than that before all's done
I will be to thee. Good fortune makes hard things
Most easy; for the god comes with laden hands.
If the strange word the queen half spoke to me
Means anything, Vicurna's car shall bear
His sister to her joy and sovereign throne.

SCENE 2

The pleasure-groves of the palace in Ujjayinie.

*Gopālaca ; Vuthsa ; Vicurna ;
at a distance under the trees Ungāricā, Vāsavaduttā and Umbā.*

Gopālaca

Vuthsa, the wine is singing in my brain,
The moonlight floods my soul. These are the hours
When the veil for eye and ear is almost rent
And we can hear wind-haired Gundharvas sing
In a strange luminous ether. Thòu art one,
Vuthsa, who has escaped the bars and walks
Smiling and harping to enchanted men.

Vuthsa

It was your earthly moonlight drew me here
And thou, Gopālaca, and Vindhya's hills
And Vāsavaduttā. Thou shalt drink with me
In moonlight in Cowsâmbie.

Gopālaca

Vuthsa, when ?
What wild and restless spirit keeps thy feet
Tonight, Vicurna ?

Vicurna

'Tis the wine. I wait.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Gopālaca

For what ?

Vicurna

(with a harsh laugh)

Why, for the wine to do its work.

Gopālaca

Where's Vâsavaduttâ ? Call her to us here.
We are not happy if she walks apart.

Vicurna

There with the mother underneath the trees.

Gopālaca

Call them. Thou, Vuthsa, she and I will drink
One cup of love and pledge our hearts in wine
Never to be parted. Thou deceiv'st the days,
O lax and laggard lover.

Vuthsa

'Tis the last.

Tomorrow lights another scene.

Gopālaca

'Tis good

That thou inclin'st thy heart. My father grows
Stern and impatient. This done, all is well.

Vuthsa

All in this poor world cannot have their will;
Its joys are bounded. I submit, it seems.
Wilt thou incline thy heart, Gopālaca ?

Gopālaca

To what ?

Vuthsa

To this fair moonlight night's result
And all that follows after.

Gopālaca

Easily

I promise that.

Vuthsa

All surely will be well.

*Munjoolicā arrives from the gates ;
Vicurna returning from the trees
with Ungāricā, Vāsavaduttā and
Umbā, goes forward to meet her.*

Vicurna

Is't done ?

Munjoolicā

They sprawl half senseless near the gate.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Vicurna

Whole bound and gagged were best. Give Vuthsa word.

He goes towards the gates.

Ungāricā

Munjoolicā, is it tonight ?

Munjoolicā

What, madam ?

Ungāricā

(striking her lightly on the cheek)

Vicurna rides tonight ?

Munjoolicā

He rides tonight.

Ungāricā

Let him not learn, nor any, that I knew.

She returns to the others.

Gopālaca

Come, all you wanderers. Mother, here's a cup
That thou must bless with thy fair magic hands
Before we drink it.

Ungāricā

May those who drink be one
In heart and great and loving all their days
Favoured by Shiva and by Luxmie blest
Until the end and far beyond.

Gopālaca

Drink, Vuthsa.
Three hearts meet in this cup.

Ungāricā

Who drinks this first,
He shall be first and he shall be the bond.

Gopālaca

Drink, sister Vāsavaduttâ, queen of all.

Ungāricā

Queen thou shalt be, my daughter, as in thy heart,
So in thy love and fortunes.

Gopālaca

Mine the last.

Ungāricā

Thou sayest, my son, yet first mid many men.

Gopālaca

Whatever place, so in this knot 'tis found.

Ungāricā

(embracing Vāsavaduttā closely)

Forget not thy dear mother in thy bliss.
Gopālaca, attend me to the house,
I have a word for thee, my son.

Gopālaca

I come.

They go towards the palace.

Vuthsa

Is it the moment ?

Munjoolicā

Yonder lies the gate.

Vuthsa

Love ! Vāsavaduttā !

Vāsavaduttā

Vuthsa ! Vuthsa ! speak,
What has been quivering in the air this night ?

He takes her in his arms

Vuthsa

Thy rapt and rapture far away, O love.
Look farewell to thy father's halls.

Vāsavaduttā

Alas !

What is this rashness ? Thou art unarmed ; the guards
Will slay thee.

Vuthsa

Fear not ! Thou in my arms,
Our fates a double shield, thou hast no fear,
Nor anything this night to think or do
Save in the chariot lie between my knees
And listen to the breezes in thy locks
Whistling to thee of far Cowsâmbie's groves.

*He bears her towards the gate,
Vicurna crossing him in his return.*

Vicurna

Haste, haste ! all's ready.

Munjoolicā

Umbâ ! Umbâ ! here !

Umbā

(who comes running up)

Oh, what is this ?

Vicurna

Should not this girl be bound ?

Umbā

Give rather thy commands.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Munjoolicā

Thou'lt face the wrath ?

Umbā

O, all for my dear mistress. If the King
Slays me, I shall have lived and died for her
For whom I was born.

Munjoolicā

Hide in the groves until
Thou hearst a rumour growing from the walls,
Then seek the house and save thyself. Till then
Let no man find thee.

Umbā

I will lose myself
In the far bushes. O come safely through.
Could you not have trusted me in this ?

Munjoolicā

Weep not !
I'll have thee to Cowsâmbie if thou live.

Vicurna

Come, follow, follow. He is near the gates.

Munjoolicā

I to my freedom, she her royal crown !

SCENE 3

Vāsavaduttā's apartment.

Mahasegu ; Ungāricā ; Umbā bound ; armed women.

Mahasegu

She is not here. O treachery ! If thou
Wert privy to this, thou shalt die impaled
Or cloven in many pieces.

Umbā

I am resigned.

Ungāricā

Thou'lt stain thy soul with a woman's murder, King ?

Mahasegu

'Tis truth ; she is too slight a thing to crush.
Are not the gardens searched ? Who are these slaves
Who dare to loiter ? If he's seized, he dies.

Ungāricā

Wilt thou make ill much worse,—if this be ill ?

Mahasegu

How say'st thou ? 'Tis not ill ? My house is shamed,
My pride downtrodden ; all the country laughs

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Already at the baffled Mahasegu
Whose daughter was plucked out by one frail boy
From midst his golden city and his hosts
Unnumbered. Who shall honour me henceforth ?
Who worship ? Who obey ? Who fear my sword ?

Ungāricā

Cowsāmbie's king has kept the Aryan law,
Nor is thy daughter shamed at all in this,
But taken with noblest honour.

Mahasegu

'Tis a law
I spurn. My will is trodden underfoot,
My pride which to preserve or to avenge
Is the warrior's righteousness. Udayan dies.
Or if he reach his capital, my hosts
Shall thunder on and blot it into flame,
A pyre for his torn dishonoured corpse.

Ungāricā

Hast thou forgotten thy daughter's heart ? Her good,
Her happiness are nothing then to thee?

Mahasegu

Is she my daughter ? She'll not wish to live,
Her sire's dishonour.

Ungāricā

Thinkest thou he seized her,
Her heart consenting not ?

Mahasegu

If it be so
And she thus rebel to my will and blood,
Let her eyes gaze upon their sensuous cause
Of treason mocked with many marring spears

Ungāricā

Art thou an Aryan king and threatenest thus ?
Thy daughter only for thyself was loved ?

Mahasegu

Silence, my queen ! Chafe not the lion wroth.

Ungāricā

The tiger rather, if this mood thou nurse.

A Kirātha woman enters.

Mahasegu

Thou com'st, slow slave !

Kirāthic

King, all the grounds are searched.
The guards lie gagged below the southern gate ;
All's empty.

Mahasegu

Where's Gopālaca ? He too
Has leisures !

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Kirāthie

There's a captain from the walls.

Mahasegu

Ha ! bring him.

The Kirāthie brings in the Avunthian captain.

Well !

Captain

Vuthsa has broken forth.
The wardens of the gate are maimed or dead ;
Triumphant, bearing Vâsavaduttâ, far
Exults his chariot o'er the moonlit plains.

Mahasegu

O bitter messenger ! Pursue, pursue !

Captain

Rébha with his armed men and stern-lipped speed
Is hot behind.

Mahasegu

Let all my force that keeps
Ujjayinie, be hurled after them, one speed.
Call, call Vicurna ; let the boy bring back
First fame of arms today in Vuthsa slain,
His sister's ravisher.

Captain

Let not my words
Offend my king. 'Twas Prince Vicurna's car
Bore forth his sister and Vicurna's self
Rode as her guard.

Mahasegu

(after an astonished pause)

Do all my house, my blood
Revolt against me ?

Captain

The princess Bundhumathie,
Thy daughter's serving maiden, at Vuthsa's side
Controlled his coursers.

Mahasegu

Her I do not blame,
Yet will most fiercely punish. Captain, go ;
Gather my chariots ; let them gallop fast
Crushing these fugitives' new-made tracks.

As the captain departs, Gopālaca enters.

Gopālaca,

Head, son, my armies ; bear thy sister back
Before irrevocable shame is done,
Nor with thy father's greatness unavenged return.

Gopālaca

My father, hear me. Though quite contrary
To all our planned design this thing has fallen,
Yet no dishonour tarnishes the deed,

But as a hero with a hero's child
Has Vuthsa seized the girl. We planned a snare,
He by a noble violence answers us.
We sought to bribe him to a vassal's state
Dangling the jewel of our house in front ;
He keeps his freedom and enjoys the gem.
Then since we chose the throw of dice and lost,
Let us be noble gamb'lers, like a friend
Receive God's hostile chance, nor house blind wounded
thoughts
As common natures might. Sanction this rapt ;
Let there be love 'twixt Vuthsa's house and us.

Mahasegu

I see that in their hearts all have conspired
Against my greatness. Thou art Avunthie's prince,
My second in my cares. Hear then ! if 'twixt
Ujjayinie and my frontiers they are seized,
My fiercer will shall strike ; but if they reach
Free Vindhya, thou thyself shalt make the peace.
Take Vâsavaduttâ's household and this girl,
Take all her wealth and gauds ; lead her thyself
Or follow to Cowsâmbie, but leave not
Till she is solemnised as Vuthsa's queen.
Sole let her reign throned by Udayan's side ;
Then only shall peace live betwixt our realms.

Gopālaca

And I will fetch Vicurna back.

Mahasegu

Son, never.
I exile the rebel to his name and house.

Let him with Vuthsa whom he chooses dwell,
My foeman's servant.

*He goes out, followed by the guards.
Gopālaca unbinds Umbā.*

Ungāricā

If we give his rage its hour,
'Twill sink. His pride will call Vicurna back,
If not the father's heart.

Gopālaca

Haste, gather quickly
Her wealth and household. I would make earliest speed,
Lest Vuthsa by ill hap be seized for ill.

Ungāricā

Fear not, my son. The hosts are not on earth
That shall prevail against these two in arms.

SCENE 4

The Avunthian forests ; moonlight.
Vuthsa ; Vāsavaduttā ; Munjoolicā.

Vuthsa

Thou hast held the reins divinely. We approach
Our kingdom's border.

Munjoolicā

But the foe surround.

Vuthsa

We will break through as twice now we have done.
Vicurna comes.

Vicurna arrives ascending.

Vicurna

Vuthsa, you Rébha asks
For parley ; is it given ? I'd hold him here
While by a long masked woodland breach I know
Silent we pass their cordon.

Vuthsa

Force is best.

Vicurna

Vuthsa, to my mind more ; but I would spare
Our Vāsavaduttā's heart these fierce alarms.
Though she breathes nothing, yet she suffers.

Vuthsa

Good !

We'll choose thy peaceful breach.

Vicurna descends.

Vāsavaduttā

Vuthsa, if I

Stood forth and bade their leader cease pursuit,
Since of my will I go, he must desist.

Vuthsa

It would diminish, love, my victory
And triumph which are thine.

Vāsavaduttā

Then let it go.

I would not stain thy fame in arms, though over
My house's head its wheels go trampling.

Munjoolicā

(*yawning*)

Ough !

If we could parley a truce for sleep. This fighting
Makes very drowsy.

Vicurna returns with Rébha.

Vuthsa

Well, captain, thy demand !

Rébha

Vuthsa, thou art environed. Dost thou yield ?

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Vuthsa

Thou mock'st ! Return ; we'll break the third last time
Thy fragile chain. Are thy dead counted ?

Rébha

The living
Outnumber their first strength ; more force comes on
Fast from Ujjayinie. Therefore yield the princess.
Thyself depart a freeman to thy realms.

Vuthsa

Know'st thou thy offer is an insolence ?

Rébha

Then, Prince, await the worst. Living and bound
Or else a corpse we'll bring thee back to our city.
Three times around thee is my cordon passed,
Thy steeds are spent, nor hast thou Urjoon's quiver.
The dawn prepares ; think it thy last.

Vuthsa

At noon

I give thee tryst within my borders.

Rébha goes.

Vicurna

Swift !

Before he reach his men and back ascend,
We must be far. Munjoolicâ, mount my horse,
Ride to Yougundharâyan, bid him bring on
His numbers ; for I see armies thundering towards us
With angry speed o'er the Avunthian plains.
I'll guide the car.

Munjoolicā

The horse ?

Vicurna

Bound in yon grove.
Rein lightly ; he's high-mettled.

Munjoolicā

Teach me not.
There is no horse yet foaled I cannot ride.
Which is my way through all this leafy tangle ?
She goes towards the grove.

Vicurna

Thou canst not miss it ; for yon path leads only
To Lokanâtha's hill beyond our borders.
Now on !

Vuthsa

The moonlight and the glad night-winds
Have rustled luminously among the leaves
And sung me wordless paeans while I fought.
Now let them fall into a rapturous strain
Of silence, while I ride with thee safe clasped
Upon my bosom.

Vāsavaduttā

If I could hold thee safe at last !

SCENE 5

On the Avunthian border.

Roomunwath ; Yougundharāyan ; Alurca ; soldiers.

Roomunwath

The dawn with rose and crimson crowned the hills,
There was no sign of Vuthsa's promised wheels.
Another noon approaches.

Yougundharāyan

Two days only
Vasuntha's here. Yet is Udayan swift
With the stroke he in a secret sloth prepares.

Roomunwath

We learned that though too late. A secret rashness,
A boy's wild venture with his life for stake
And a kingdom ! Dangerously dawns this reign.

Alurca

See, see, a horseman over Avunthie's edge
Rides to us. He quests forward with his eyes.

Roomunwath

Whoe'er he be, he has travelled far. His beast
Labours and stumbles on.

Yougundharāyan

This is no horseman,
It is a woman rides though swift and armed.

Alurca

She has seen us and dismounts.

Yougundharāyan

A woman rides !
My mind misgives me. Is't some evil chance ?
Comes she a broken messenger of grief ?
She runs as if pursued.

Alurca

She's young and fair.

Munjoolicā arrives.

Munjoolicā

Art thou king Vuthsa's captain ?

Roomunwath

I am he.

Munjoolicā

Gather thy force; for Vuthsa drives here fast,
But hostile armies surge behind his wheels.
Fast, fast, into the woods your succour bring,
Lest over his wearied coursers and spent quiver
Numbers and speed prevail.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Yougundharāyan

Roomunwath, swift. •

Roomunwath goes.

But who art thou and where shall be my surety
That thou art no Avunthian sent to lure
Our force into an ambush ?

Munjoolicā

This is surely
Yougundharāyan of the prudent brain.
Thy question I reply; the rest resolve
But swiftly, lest Fate mock thy wary thoughts.
My name is Bundhumathie and my father
Sourashtra held; but I, his daughter, taken
Served in Avunthie Vāsavaduttā. Knowest thou
This ring ?

Yougundharāyan

'Tis Vuthsa's.

Munjoolicā

Young Vicurna's bay
I rode, who guards his sister's ravisher
Against the angry rescuers. Will these riddles,
Wise of statesmen, solve thy cautious doubt ?

Yougundharāyan

Thy tale is strange; but thou at least art true.

Munjoolicā

Thou art not prudent only !

Yougundharāyan

Forward then.
Roomunwath's camp already is astir.

SCENE 6.

Near the edge of the forest in Avunthie.

Roomunwath ; Yougundharāyan ; Alurca ; Munjoolicā ; forces.

Roomunwath

Stay, stay our march; 'tis Vuthsa's car arrives.
The tired horses stumble as they pause.

Yougundharāyan

There is a noise of armies close behind
And out of woods the Avunthian wheels emerge.

There arrive Vuthsa, Vicurna, Vāsavaduttā

Vuthsa

My father, all things to their hour are true
And I bring back my venture. Am I pardoned
Its secrecy ?

Yougundharāyan

My pupil and son no more,
But hero and monarch ! Thou hast set thy foot
Upon Avunthie's head.

Vuthsa

Yet still thy son.

Yougundharāyan

Hail, Vāsavaduttâ, great Cowsâmbie's queen.

Vāsavaduttâ

(smiling happily on Vuthsa)

My crown was won by desperate alarms.

Vuthsa

It was a perilous race and in the end
Fate won by a head. Were it not the difficult paths
Baffled their numbers, we were hardly here,
So oft we had to pause and rest our steeds.
But in less strength they dared not venture on.

Yougundharāyan

They range their battle now.

Vuthsa

Speak thou to them.

War must not break.

Yougundharāyan

Demand a parley there.

Vuthsa

If we must fight, it shall be for defence
Retreating while we war unless they urge
Too far their violent trespass.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Vicurna

Rébha comes.

Rébha arrives.

Rébha

Ye are suitors for a parley ?

Vicurna

Rébha, with beaten men.

Rébha

Because you had your sister in the car
Our shafts were hampered.

Vicurna

Nor could with swords prevail
Against two boys so many hundred men.

Rébha

O Prince Vicurna, what thou hast done today
Against thy name and nation, I forbear
To value. 'Tis thy first essay of arms.

Vicurna

Well dost thou not to weigh thy better's deeds.

Yougundharāyan

Rébha, wilt thou urge vainly yet this strife ?
What hitherto was done, was private act

And duel; now if thou insist on fight,
Two nations are embroiled; and to what end ?

Rébha

I will take Vuthsa and the Princess back.
It is my king's command.

Yougundharāyan

The impossible
No man is bound to endeavour. While we fight,
King Vuthsa with the captive princess bounds
Unhindered to his high-walled capital.

Rébha

It is my king's command. I am his arm
And not his counsellor; nor to use my brain
Have any right, save for the swift way to fulfil
His proud and absolute mandate.

Yougundharāyan

If there came
Word from Ujjayinie, then pursuit must cease ?

Rébha

Then truly.

Yougundharāyan

Send a horseman, Rébha, ask.
All meanwhile shall remain as now it stands.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Rébha

I'll send no horseman; I will fight.

Yougundharāayn

Then war !

Rébha

We fear it not. This is strange insolence
To stand in arms upon Avunthian ground
And issue mandates to the country's lords.

He is going

Roomunwath

Rébha, yet pause ! No messenger thou needst.
Look where yon chariot furious bounding comes
And over it streams Avunthie's royal flag.

Rébha

It is the prince Gopālaca. Of this I am glad.

Vāsavaduttā

O if my brother comes, then all is well.

Vuthsa

For thou art Luxmie. Thou beside me, Fate
And Fortune, peace and battle must obey
The vagrant lightest-winged of my desires.

Gopālaca arrives; with him Umbā.

Gopālaca

Hail, Vuthsa ! peace and love between our lands !

Vuthsa

I hold them here incarnate. Welcome thou
Their strong achiever.

Gopālaca

As earnest and as proof
Receive this fair accomplice of thy flight
Unpunished. Sister, take her to thy arms.

Vāsavaduttā

O Umbâ, thou com'st safe to me !

Gopālaca

And all
My sister's household and her wealth comes fast
Behind me. Only one claim Avunthie keeps;
My sister shall sit throned thy only queen,—
Which, pardon me, my eyes must witness done
With honour to our name.

Vuthsa

Cowsâmbie's majesty
Will brook not even in this, Gopālaca,
A foreign summons. Surely my will and love
Shall throne most high, not strong Avunthie's child,
But Vāsavaduttâ; whether alone, her will

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

And mine, the nation and the kingdom's good
Consenting shall decide. Therefore this claim
Urge not, my brother.

Gopālaca

Let not this divide us.
The present's gladness is enough; the future's hers
And thine, Udayan, nor shall any man
Compel thee. Boy, thy revolt was rash and fierce
Wronging thy house and thy high father's will.
Exiled must thou in far Cowsâmbie dwell
Until his wrath is dead.

Vicurna

I care not, brother.
I have done my will, I have observed the right.
Near Vuthsa and my sister's home enough
And I shall see new countries.

Vuthsa

Follow behind,
Gopâlaca; thy sister's household bring
And all the force thou wilt. We speed in front.
Ride thou, Alurca, near us; let thy harp
Speak of love's anthems and her golden life
To Vâsavaduttâ. Love, the storm is past,
The peril o'er. Now we shall glide, my queen,
Through green-gold woods and between golden fields
To float for ever in a golden dream,
O earth's gold Luxmie, till the shining gates
Eternal open to us thy heavenly home.

Vaithae

Coursambie's majesty,
Will brook not even in this, Gopalaia,
A foreign summons. Surely my will and love
Shall throne most high, not strong Arunthie's child,
But Vāsavadattā; whether alone, her will
And mine the nation and the kingdom's good
Consenting shall decide. Therefore this claim
Uproot not, my brother.

Gopalaia

Let not this divide us.
The present's gladness is enough: the future's hers
And thine, Gopalaia, nor shall any man
Compel thee. Boy, thy wrath was rash and fierce
Wrangling thy house and thy high father's will.
Exiled must thou in far Coursambie dwell
Until his wrath is dead.

Vivana

I care not, brother
I have done my will, I have observed the right.
Near Vaithae and my sister's home enough
And I shall see new countries.

Vaithae

Follow behind,
Gopalaia; thy sister's household bring
And all the force thou wilt. We speed we front.
Ride thou, A Lucia, near us; let thy harp
Speak of love's anthem and her golden life
To Vāsavadattā. Love, the storm is past,
The peril o'er. Now we shall glide, my queen,
Through green gold woods and between golden fields
To float for ever in a golden dream,
O earth's gold luxurie, till the shining gates
Eternal open to us thy heavenly home.

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Fori Anubando

SECTION TWO

THE REAL SIGNIFICANCE OF PLATO'S DIALOGUE
"PARMENIDES" AND ITS RELATION TO
SRI AUROBINDO'S PHILOSOPHY.

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PLATO's dialogue "Parmenides" has been the subject of a great deal of controversy among Greek scholars. Überweg regarded the dialogue as spurious, as he could not conceive that Plato who had been such a staunch upholder of the doctrine of ideas in his earlier dialogues, could himself criticise so mercilessly his own doctrine. Burnet, admitting that there is a fundamental difference between the standpoint of the earlier dialogues and that of "Parmenides" and the later dialogues of Plato, came to the conclusion that Plato never held the doctrine of ideas himself but that it was held by Socrates and that, consequently, Plato, who in his earlier dialogues had made Socrates the mouthpiece of the views that were expressed in them, expounded the doctrine of ideas as it was held by his master Socrates. In the later dialogues however, where Socrates is no longer the chief spokesman and is relegated to a comparatively unimportant position (as in the "Parmenides" and the "Sophist") or omitted altogether (as in the "Laws"), there is a criticism of the doctrine of ideas and even a complete rejection of it.(1) Taylor in his book *Plato, the Man and his Work* expressed the view that we must not take this dialogue seriously, but treat it as a *jeu d'esprit*, as an elaborate joke.(2)

These views it is impossible to accept. About Überweg's view that the dialogue is spurious, as Jowett has pointed out, no work of such length has ever been known to be spurious. Burnet's view that Plato never held the doctrine of ideas himself, although it was held by his master Socrates and therefore he had to state it in his earlier dialogues where Socrates was the chief spokesman and the views represented in them were his views, is based upon the assumption that the criticism of the doctrine of ideas in the "Parmenides" amounted virtually to a rejection of it, and that consequently, Plato could never have put it in the dialogue if he really was an upholder of this doctrine.

As we shall show in the sequel, the criticism of this doctrine which we find in this dialogue does not amount to a rejection of it but only points to certain defects of it which call for some modification of it. Is it so very strange for a philosopher to change somewhat his earlier views in the light of his later experience? There are several instances recorded in the history of philosophy of philosophers who have changed considerably their earlier views in their later works. The best known example is that of Berkeley who in his book *Sirius* changed very much his earlier standpoint as represented in his *Principles of Knowledge*. Another well-known example is that of Schelling who had an earlier philosophy and a later philosophy. The changes suggested by the criticism of the doctrine of ideas are precisely of such a nature as a philosopher would be expected to make on giving further thought to it. This we shall show presently. There remains the view of Taylor, who in his *Plato, The Man and his Work* looks upon the whole dialogue as an elaborate joke. Apart from the fact that Plato was too seriously-minded a person to write anything as big as this dialogue simply for fun, the contents of the dialogue do not at all bear out this description of it. There is nowhere any suggestion that the discussions in it are to be treated as a joke. We hold, in fact, just the opposite view, namely, that it is a very serious philosophical work which marks a distinct landmark in the development of Plato's thought.

The dialogue "Parmenides" is a very serious piece of philosophical Work.

As we have just said, in our opinion, far from being a joke, it is a very serious philosophical work, and its object is to give us a new philosophical outlook which is a great improvement upon the earlier outlook as given in the earlier dialogues. The introduction of Parmenides and Zeno in the dialogue was for the purpose of showing that the change which was mainly needed was a change in the logical outlook, the previous outlook, which was that of universals which absolutely transcended the particulars, being unsatisfactory. The change which was necessary here was a change in favour of an outlook which would recognise universals which had an immanent relationship with particulars. This change in the logical outlook was to produce a change in the philosophical outlook also, and the dialogue hints at this change without fully elaborating it.

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Socrates himself in his opening speech points out that there is no logical difficulty in conceiving that the same object may be both like and unlike—like in some of its parts or features and unlike in other parts. All the difficulties arise when we deal with abstract ideas like like and unlike. Then it is that we find that like and unlike totally exclude each other and cannot have anything in common. The problem therefore clearly is : How in the realm of ideas also is it possible to have that kind of reconciliation of opposites which is possible in the case of concrete objects? The problem is one which concerns as much the position of Zeno and Parmenides as it does that of Socrates, for Zeno and Parmenides can only maintain that the One only is and the Many are not by showing that if Being is many, it must be both like and unlike, and that it is the impossibility of its being both these opposites that leads to the conclusion that only the One is and the Many are not.

Parmenides' criticism of Socrates' theory of ideas

It was now Parmenides' turn to question Socrates. Is Socrates so sure that his doctrine can stand the same scrutiny to which he subjected the position of Zeno and Parmenides ?

The whole scrutiny was practically directed against two things : (1) the absolute distinction between ideas and things, and (2) the Socratic theory of the participation of things in the ideas.

As regards the first point, the difficulty arises in this way : (1) The basis upon which the whole theory rests is the distinction between things and the ideas of them. But is it possible to have universal ideas of all things ? Take, for instance, things like filth and dirt. Can we make universal ideas of them ? Socrates admits that there is an absurdity in assuming universal ideas to exist of them and yet has a feeling that his theory requires that the existence of universal ideas even in these cases has to be admitted. This hesitation brings from Parmenides the remark that it is due to the fact that Socrates is still young and that philosophy still sits loosely upon him and he attaches too much importance to the opinions of men.

(2) Coming now to the second feature of the theory of ideas, namely, that things are what they are by participating in universal ideas, the difficulties that arise may be enumerated as follows :

(a) when it is said that man is man by partaking in the universal

idea called man, then there are two possibilities : either that each individual man partakes of the whole universal, or that each individual partakes of one part of the universal only. In the former case, the difficulty will arise that the idea being one whole, will be in each one of the many. In the latter, the wholeness of the idea will be gone, and it will be split up into a number of parts.

One answer to this is that the idea may be like the day, which is one and the same in many places at once, and yet continues with itself. But this means that the idea is like a sail which covers all men. This, however, raises the point noticed above, namely, whether the whole sail covers all the men or whether one part of the sail covers one man and another part another, and so on. In each case the difficulties noted above would arise. A side issue of these difficulties will be that if each one of us is small by partaking of a portion of smallness, then the absolutely small will be greater, and if that is so, then that to which the part of the small is added will be smaller and not greater than before.

(b) Another difficulty that arises in connection with the theory of participation is that it leads to an infinite regress. This happens in the following way : If you say things are great by partaking of greatness, then another greatness will arise which will embrace both the great things and the idea of greatness, and this will lead to a third greatness, and so on.

(c) One solution of the difficulty of infinite regress is to treat ideas as thoughts in our mind. This is the conceptualistic solution. It avoids no doubt the infinite regress, but it creates serious difficulties of its own. For we cannot stop with ideas of the mind. Ideas must be ideas of something; otherwise they will lose all meaning. Thus the conceptualistic solution is no solution.

(d) Another way of avoiding the difficulty is to look upon ideas as patterns fixed in nature, and to treat participation as meaning assimilation to the patterns.

(e) Here also one difficulty arises, namely, that if individuals are like the patterns, then the patterns also will be like the individuals, and they must both partake of the idea of likeness. But this means that all the old difficulties, including that of the infinite regress, will arise.

(f) There is also the further difficulty that if the ideas are treated as absolute, then there can be no knowledge of them, for knowledge

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means bringing them into relation with ourselves and thus making them lose their absoluteness.

(g) Not only that, but there will arise the further absurdity that God who must be supposed to have absolute knowledge, will have no knowledge of human beings.

(h) Not only His knowledge but his authority also will have no application to human beings, and conversely, human knowledge and human authority will have no application to the realm of gods.

(i) In view of these difficulties, people will say that the ideas do not exist, or if they exist, they are absolutely unknown to us.

Parmenides, however, after pointing out all these difficulties which concern the theory of ideas which treats them as absolute and totally different from the things of this world, says that ideas must exist, or there can be no philosophy. I quote below his very words as they are given in Jowett's translation (3) :

“And yet, Socrates, said Parmenides, if a man, fixing his attention on these and the like difficulties, does away with ideas of things and will not admit that every individual thing has its own determinate idea which is always one and the same, he will have nothing on which his mind can rest, and so he will utterly destroy the power of reasoning, as you seem to me to have particularly noted.

“Very true, he (Socrates) said.

“But, then what is to become of philosophy ? Whither shall we turn, if ideas are unknown ?”

Now I ask in all seriousness : Do these words show that Parmenides wants to do away with the theory of ideas ? Do not his words, “But what is to become of philosophy ?” show as clearly as anything possibly can show, that he wants to have a theory of ideas, though not in the form in which Socrates formulated it, that is, which makes these ideas absolute, that is, totally different from the world of things, that is to say, our everyday world ? Is it possible, after this, to say with Burnet, that the theory of ideas is Socratic, and that Plato never held it ?

Connection between the theory of ideas and the logic of the One and the Many

But this is not all. Parmenides follows up his assertion that a theory of ideas is necessary if philosophy is to live, by pointing out

the connection between this theory and the dialectic of the One and the Many. The two, in fact are the same. The problem of the relation between the world of ideas and the world in which we live and move is precisely the same as the problem of the One and the Many. It seems strange, therefore, that even great Greek scholars should put it forward as a very difficult problem the discovery of the connection between the first part of this dialogue and the second part. The connection is obvious. In fact, we may go so far as to say that the main object of the dialogue is to re-establish the theory of ideas on the basis of a proper logic of the One and the Many. This logic is as necessary for the Socratic theory of ideas as for the Parmenidean theory of Being.(4) Evidently, Plato felt that the theory of ideas as held by his master and as expounded by him also in his earlier dialogues was not based upon any sound principle and was therefore more or less dogmatic, and that what was needed was a reshuffling and reorientation of it on the basis of a proper logic, namely, the logic of the One and the Many.

The dialectic of the One and the Many

We are therefore led by a very natural and obvious process to the dialectic of the One and the Many. In fact, the transition from the theory of ideas to this dialectic is so obvious and so natural that our only surprise is that it should not have been detected earlier.

In this dialectic Plato shows, firstly, how much help we can get from dialectic in solving the relation between the One and the Many. Although the problem is rather a technical one, yet on it hangs the whole problem of the relation of the world in which we live to the absolute Reality.

The problem is approached, first by asserting that the One exists, and then finding out what are the consequences that follow from this about the Many. Similarly, the Many are assumed to exist, and the consequences that follow from it with regard to the nature of the One are indicated. Then thirdly, the One is supposed not to exist, and the consequences that follow from it with regard to the Many are drawn. And fourthly, the Many are supposed not to exist, and the consequences that follow from it with regard to the One are shown. Fifthly, the One is supposed to exist, and the consequences that follow from it with regard to the One are shown, and sixthly, the Many are supposed

to exist and the consequences that follow from it with regard to the nature of the Many are shown.

In everyone of these cases the same negative conclusion is shown to follow, namely, that nothing definite can be said. From the existence of the One nothing definite can be asserted either about the One or about the Many. Similarly, from the denial of the One nothing definite can be stated about either the One or the Many. And the same thing is shown with regard to the Many. Neither the assertion nor the denial of the One or the Many, therefore, leads to any definite conclusion either about the One or the Many.

The upshot of the dialectic of the One and the Many

What is the upshot of the dialectic of the One and the Many? To my mind, it is the same as the result of the examination of the theory of ideas, namely, that the concept of the universal, as having no relation to the particular, is philosophically barren. The dialectic shows this defect clearly, where the One is treated as the abstract One, which excludes absolutely the Many, and *vice versa*. The theory of ideas as originally put by Socrates and accepted by Plato in his earlier dialogues, also suffers from the same defect. What is wanted, therefore, is not to reject altogether the theory of ideas but to modify it by making the universal lose its abstract character and bringing it into relation with the particular. So also the dialectic which philosophy requires is not the dialectic of the abstract One and the Many, where no kind of relationship is possible between the two, but the dialectic where the One and the Many have an intimate relation with each other, by virtue of which the One cannot be conceived without the Many, nor the Many without the One. A true dialectic, as well as a true theory of ideas, must always treat the universals or ideas as *concrete* universals.

This will be very clear if we examine a little closely the arguments that are put forward in order to show that neither the One nor the Many can be.

Let us take the One and see whether the arguments that are advanced to show that the One cannot be, have any real validity. We reproduce below the arguments as given in Jowett's translation :(5)

P. If the One is, the One cannot be many ?

A. Impossible.

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P. Then the One cannot have parts, and cannot be a whole ?

A. Why not ?

P. Because every part is a part of a whole, is it not ?

A. Yes.

P. And what is a whole ? Would not that of which no part is wanting be a whole ?

A. Certainly.

P. Then, in either case, the One would be made up of parts ; both as being a whole, and also as having parts.

A. To be sure.

P. And in either case, the One would be many, and not one?

A. True.

P. But surely, it ought to be one and not many ?

A. It ought.

Now what does this argument really amount to, and how does it prove that the One is not ? The argument assumes at the very beginning that the One cannot be many. Now this is precisely where the argument is faulty. It applies only when the One is so conceived that it excludes altogether the Many. It has no application where the One is conceived in such a way that it does *not* exclude the Many. This we see clearly also in another step of the argument where it is said that the One cannot have parts and cannot be a whole, because every part is part of a whole. And what is a whole ? Evidently, that of which no part is wanting. Then in either case, the One would be made up of parts, both as being a whole and also as having parts. And in either case, the One would be many and not one.

Here also the assumption is that if the One is a whole, it cannot have parts if it is to remain One. Now this is precisely where the argument is wrong. Why should the One cease to be One if it has parts ? It only ceases to be One in such a case if it is an abstract One. The argument therefore is only valid if the concepts One, Many, Whole, Parts are taken as abstract concepts.

We may say therefore that the object of the dialectic is really to show the weakness of the position which makes an abstract universal of every concept. It has no application if the concepts are taken as concrete universals. This is, in fact, what we have just seen is the meaning also of the criticism of the doctrine of ideas.

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It is the same with the other parts of the elaborate dialectic. The dialectic only applies where the concepts are taken as abstract universals. It does not apply at all to concepts which are concrete universals.

We say therefore that really the object of the criticism of the theory of ideas and also of the elaborate dialectic of the One and the Many is to show the weakness of the view which treats universals as abstract universals and thereby to suggest that universals are really concrete universals. And this is, in fact, what Plato wanted to say through the mouth of Parmenides. Indeed, this is what Socrates himself said at the very beginning of the dialogue, when he pointed out that opposites, like and unlike, can very well dwell in a concrete reality, and that their mutual exclusion and contradiction only arise when they are treated as abstract ideas. The solution of the difficulty therefore is very clear : Do away with the notion that like and unlike, one and many, whole and parts, are mutually exclusive, and all the difficulties will vanish as dew drops vanish with the rising of the sun. The difficulties, in fact, are artificial. They exist only in the artificial region of abstract ideas.

*What Plato distinctly hints at is the co-existence of opposites
in a concrete reality*

Of course, Plato only hints at, but does not prove the coexistence of opposites, because the dialogue does not give any positive results but throws out hints. But these hints are more eloquent than any positive statement could be. And if we do not take these hints and introduce the necessary changes in the concept of the universal, we miss the whole purport of the dialogue. And this is really not such a great innovation as we seem at first sight to think. Plato already has shown this in the "Republic" with regard to the idea of good, for it is not an abstract idea out of all relation to the world of particulars, but it dwells in that world and gives all significance and value to that world. The dialogue "Parmenides" may therefore be said to generalize the principle which has already been shown to be in operation in the idea of good.

The "Sophist" carries further the message of the "Parmenides"

What we may call therefore broadly the message of the "Parmenides", though this message is conveyed to us not by explicit words

but by means of broad hints, is that universals, if they are genuine universals and not artificial creations of the human intellect, must be concrete universals, that is to say, they must have their existence in and through the particulars. Detached from the particulars, they lose all their meaning. And the higher we ascend in the scale of universality, the greater is the need of concretization, so that the Absolute is the most concrete reality.

This thought is more fully developed in the "Sophist", where reality is definitely shown to be a synthesis of opposites, none of which truly represents its character. Neither the affirmative element nor the negative element can by itself constitute reality. It is the combination of the two, by which the abstract character of both is removed, that can give rise to reality.

This idea is the central one of the "Sophist". The "Parmenides" left us with only a hint that unless the abstract character of the One and the Many is removed, neither of them can be applied to the world of reality. But how this abstract character is to be removed,—on this it has thrown no light. This is done in the "Sophist".

Here it is definitely asserted that negation is of the very essence of affirmation, and that without negation, no thought can really rise to anything which is significant. This is very beautifully expressed in this dialogue by the Stranger, when he says: "For all these reasons, Theaetetus, we must admit that refutation is the greatest and chiefest of purifications, and he who has not been refuted, though he be the Great King himself, is in an awful state of impurity". (6) The meaning of this is that you don't know a truth unless you have seen it also through its opposite, and when you have seen it as it is, and when you have seen it also through its refutation, then you may be said to have grasped it.

In fact, the idea that runs through the later dialogues of Plato, beginning with the "Sophist" and continuing through the "Statesman", the "Philebus" and the "Laws" is, as Jowett points out (7) that not-Being is itself a class of Being, and in a sense co-extensive with Being. He is gradually weaning himself from the influence of the Eleatic philosophy for which each idea is a fixed one and cannot be combined with any other. And any such combination is a passage through not-Being. Thus Being cannot remain Being without being combined with not-Being.

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This may be expressed by saying that the development of Plato's thought from the "Parmenides" to the later dialogues is towards a greater and greater realization of the truth that Reality is a concrete experience which we may call Spirit, which cannot remain in such watertight compartments as Being and not-Being but must pass continuously from the one to the other in the course of its normal functioning. To restrict it to any one idea to the exclusion of the others would be to smother it. The beginning of this process we see in the "Parmenides", but it continues further in the later dialogues, making Plato's divergence from the Eleatic standpoint greater and greater.

The place of "Theaetetus" in the development of Plato's thought

This does not mean, however, his adherence to the Heraclitean doctrine of flux. This is what Plato wants to show in the dialogue "Theaetetus". In fact, Heracliteanism itself is a sort of inverted Eleaticism. It also hampers the free movement of Reality from one state to another, from movement to rest, and from rest to movement. Paradoxical as it may seem, there is as much rigidity in Heracliteanism as in Eleaticism. If the thing that is in motion can never be at rest, then motion itself will be an unvarying, eternal condition, which suffers from the same defect as the unvarying eternal sameness of the Parmenidean conception of Being. In fact, just as Being can never be Being if it is not allowed to pass into not-Being, so not-Being can never remain not-Being if it is not allowed to pass into Being.

It is the genius of Plato which sees that the same difficulty which we notice in Heracliteanism is also found in the Protagorean doctrine of sensationalism or perceptualism. For here also we are confined to one unvarying condition, namely, the condition of unceasing change. There is no essential difference between the two, and both alike do violence to Reality which can never remain eternally fixed in any one condition, whether it is rest or whether it is motion.

As we shall see presently, Plato's thought thus gradually leads him to a position closely akin to that of Hegel. But there is an important difference also. For one thing, the idea of the evolution of thought from its lowest form in abstract Being to its highest in the Absolute Idea, which is characteristic of Hegelian philosophy, is wanting in Plato, who beyond showing that Not-Being itself is a kind of Being

and cannot be treated as a mere negation and hinting at the possibility of combining Being and Not-Being into a concrete form of Being, does not carry it to the point which is pivotal for the Hegelian philosophy, namely, that Thought, which for Hegel is the same as Reality, is a continuous process which does not stop with the mere breaking up of the opposition between Being and Not-Being but proceeds to develop further and further by continually breaking all opposition that it meets on the way. This whole evolutionary conception of Reality is lacking in Plato. But before we come to Hegel, we have to trace the further development of Plato's thought in the "Philebus" and the "Laws".

The "Philebus" carries further the conception of a concrete universal

Here, as in the "Sophist", the paradox of the One and the Many is solved by the principle of the coexistence of opposites. The coexistence of opposites is a fact with which we are daily brought face to face in the course of our normal life-experience, and does not stand in need of any elaborate logical explanation. Our body, for instance, is one of the best examples of such co-existence. Indeed, the main feature of this dialogue is its synthetic character. Things which are most hard to combine, such as pleasure and knowledge, are here united, and their union is shown to take place in the idea of good. The "Philebus", therefore, comes back to the standpoint of the "Republic" but with the added advantage that it is able to relate the idea of good directly to the most concrete experiences of life. This "solvitur ambulando" of the most difficult problems of philosophy, such as the relation between the finite and the infinite, or of the one and the many, or of pleasure and wisdom, in the idea of good, is the special gift of the "Philebus". And the special feature of this dialogue is that the principle which unites these opposites is conceived as a value, namely, the idea of good. The purely dialectical point of view, therefore, is here replaced by an axiological one, as is done in the "Republic". In fact, the dialogue shows how the contradictory ideas which retain their contrast throughout the realm of ideas, shed their exclusive character in the world of actual experience. As Jowett says, "Zeno illustrated the contradiction by well-known examples taken from outward objects. But Socrates seems to intimate that the time had arrived for discarding these hackneyed illustrations; such difficulties had long been solved by common

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sense ('solvitur ambulando'); the fact of the co-existence of opposites was a sufficient answer to them".(8) Even the finite and the infinite are made to drop their opposition, and their reconciliation is effected through the idea of law operating in the finite. There is a definite advance here from the abstractness of the abstract ideas to the concreteness of such values as law, the good, etc. The process which was started in the "Parmenides" is carried out much further in the "Philebus", and Plato shows how the philosopher can tackle the concrete problems of life. It should be remembered, however, that he does this, not by abandoning his idealism or mixing it with empiricism, as Aristotle has done, but by showing that the facts of our concrete life can be brought within the purview of the ideas, and indeed, it is only when this is done that their value for us can be estimated. One great application of this principle Plato makes in this dialogue in evaluating pleasure, which, being of the nature of genesis or becoming, will have to be judged by reference to the end for which it is a becoming. That end is the value which is called the good, and pleasure must therefore be regarded as subordinate to it, and cannot claim to be a good.

The "Laws" : What is its true status ?

When we come to the "Laws", we meet with a situation which is even more complicated than that of the "Parmenides", for there the difficulty was to reconcile the standpoint of that dialogue with that of the earlier ones. Here the difficulty is much greater, for here there are, in addition to the views expressed in this dialogue, fundamental differences in style and use of words which have made even such a great Greek scholar as Zeller doubt its authenticity. But we agree with Jowett that there can be no doubt that it is a genuine work of Plato's. His reasons for thinking so, Jowett has stated very fully and very clearly in the opening pages of his Introduction to this dialogue, and we cannot do better than refer the reader to them.

So far as the treatment of the subject-matter is concerned, though no doubt there is a great difference when we compare this dialogue with the "Republic" which also deals with a similar subject-matter, yet this difference is exactly what we are to expect if we follow carefully the tendency which runs through all the later dialogues of Plato, namely, that of removing the abstract character of the ideas and bringing them

more in contact with the world of the many in which we happen to live. We shall have no difficulty in understanding this if we remember in the first place that the "Laws", unlike the "Republic", does not exhibit an ideal State, "but one supposed to be on the level of human motives and feelings; it is also on the level of popular religion, though elevated and purified; hence there is an attempt made to show that the pleasant is also the just. But, on the other hand, the priority of the soul to the body, and of God to the soul, is always insisted upon as the true incentive to virtue, especially with great force and eloquence at the commencement of Book V. And the work of legislation is carried back to the first principle of morals." (9)

It follows from this quotation from Jowett that it cannot be said that the idealistic principles are thrown overboard and a purely empirical treatment is resorted to. Let us hear further what Jowett has to say : "No other writing of Plato shows so profound an insight into the world and into human nature as the "Laws". That 'cities will never cease from evil until they are better governed' is the text of the "Laws" as well as of the "Statesman" and the "Republic". The principle that the balance of power preserves (iii. 691, 692); the reflection that no one ever passed life in disbelief of the gods (x. 688C); the remark that the characters of men are best seen in convivial intercourse (i. 649); the observation that the people must be allowed to share not only in the government but also in the administration of Justice (vi. 768 sq.); the desire to make laws, not with a view to courage only, but to all virtue (i. 630 D); the clear perception that education begins with birth, or even, as he would say, before birth (vii. 789 A); the attempt to purify religion...above all, perhaps the distinct consciousness that under the actual circumstances of mankind, the ideal cannot be carried out (v. 739B, 746 B), and yet may be a guiding principle—will appear to us, if we remember that we are still in the dawn of politics, to show a great depth of political wisdom." (10)

From these observations of Jowett's it will be clear that it is not possible to treat the "Laws" as a fall from the idealism of the earlier dialogues of Plato. All that we can say is that his idealism is tempered here by the realities of the situation which he sees around him. This is, however, the tendency which has marked all the later works of Plato, what is important to observe here is that idealism, though it is tempered here by a fuller knowledge of the world in which we find ourselves, is

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not given up, and the world is not allowed to drift without the guidance of ideals. This is indeed what we have already said is the result of Plato's mature thoughts and wider experience.

Plato and Aristotle

When we come to Aristotle, we find a different temperament—a temperament in which minute observation of details and love for particulars constitute the most important element. It is true, as Gomperz has pointed out, (11) there is mixed with this the Platonic love for synthesis, for welding all divers pieces of experience into one whole of systematic knowledge, but the two parts of his mental constitution fall apart, and we have the curious spectacle of a philosopher who allows on the one hand the intrusion into philosophy of unlimited masses of unrelated experiences, and on the other hand, insists upon absolute rigidity and coherence. He is Platonic enough to seek to unify all knowledge into a perfectly consistent whole, but it clashes with the other part of his temperament—what we may call the empirical part—which exhibits an insatiable thirst for new facts. The result is a curious blend of idealism and empiricism which stands in the way of building up a completely unified philosophy. This is seen very clearly in his works, such as his *Politics* or his *Organon*, (12) which are each of them very good textbooks on the subjects with which they deal but which do not lend themselves to be fitted into a composite whole. Aristotle therefore ranks as perhaps the world's best textbook writer, but as a philosopher he lacks that unifying vision which is the chief feature of Plato, which can grasp the entire range of human knowledge and weld it into one harmonious, homogeneous whole.

Aristotle was essentially an encyclopaedist, a man who had a burning desire to have a detailed knowledge of all manner of things. We cannot do better here than quote Gomperz in his description of the characteristics of the encyclopaedist and the difficulties and limitations of his task. (13)

“The encyclopaedist engrossed in untiring detail work may strive as he will after strict unity in the fabric of his thought; his labours will never be crowned with the same measure of success that awaits

an intellect of equal calibre less stimulated and less distracted by the exigent instinct of the polymath."

There is no doubt that Aristotle succeeded as an encyclopaedist more than any other philosopher and discovered new branches of human knowledge and wrote elaborate treatises on them in a manner which cannot but strike us with wonder. But what about the centre from which the branches of knowledge have emanated? Can it be said to retain in his philosophy that binding force which, for instance, Plato's idea of good had, by which the entire field of human knowledge could be seen to move round it?

The answer to this is certainly in the negative. Not only did Aristotle not give us any central idea from which all the separate branches of his philosophy could be deduced, but he opposed very strongly the acceptance of any such idea, and indeed, that was one of the main points of his criticism of Plato's doctrine of ideas. He looked upon it as the main weakness of Plato's philosophy that he believed in universals as the sole realities, neglecting the particulars. He, on the contrary, could never neglect them. That was all to the good. Plato himself, as we have seen, changed his original stand-point of indifference to the particulars and adopted one in which the particulars had a definite place in the universal. If Aristotle had only insisted upon giving a place to the particulars in the universal, that would have been quite in the spirit of Plato's later philosophy and he could have been said to have carried out further the concretization of the universal which was the essence of the teaching of Plato's later dialogues. The question, however, is : Did Aristotle only want to do this, or did he want to give the particulars a status somewhat similar to that which Leibnitz gave to his monads? Gomperz seems to be inclined to take the latter view, as appears from the following statement of his, which occurs in the fourth volume of his *Greek Thinkers* : (14)

"There is yet another fundamental characteristic which seems to belong to the great encyclopaedist as such. He who moves and has his being in observation and the investigation of details can hardly fail fully to appreciate whatever is individual; he is out of reach of the temptation to merge separate existences in an absorbing universal; whether this be named Idea as by Plato, or Substance as by Spinoza.

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It is hardly a chance coincidence that the most eminent encyclopaedist of modern times created the doctrine of Monads, and that his greater predecessor of antiquity found the type of complete reality in the individual".

There is one point, however, where Aristotle has distinctly scored over Plato, and that is in his conception of Evolution, and as an offshoot of this, his teleological view of the world process. Mure in his book on Aristotle has pointed out very prominently this feature of Aristotle's philosophy, and we cannot do better than quote here what he has to say :

"The universe, however—at least in part and in so far as it is perceptible by the senses—is a universe of change. But if the being of a thing is also change—if it, seemingly, both *is* and *is not*—what is it? How can we know it?

"Aristotle answers that change too is not irrational nor uncaused. In all its forms—in substantial change (the process, for example, of which the termini are birth and death) and also in the less radical alterations of quality, bulk, or even spatial position—change passes always to or from a climax, it is never mere flux, anabolic or catabolic, a doing or an undoing. And it is this tide taken at its height which reveals what the developing thing is. At this climax the thing is realized (*is* "in a state of actuality") ; then only it possesses its own full nature and excellence, and is at once real and intelligible. Before and after this zenith it is only potentially (*is* "in a state of potentiality") ; its full nature is beyond or behind it ; it is neither fully real nor fully intelligible." (15)

Ah, here then is a point missed by Plato, namely, that reality can be seen as much in the process as in existence. The new idea which is introduced here is that of evolution. There was no real place for evolution in Plato's system. Although he did recognize motion and becoming and give them a place by the side of being and rest—and this, indeed, as we have seen, is the achievement of the "Parmenides"—yet it never occurred to him that becoming is being converted into being and that this conversion is a real conversion. This is a point where Aristotle has definitely scored over Plato. The point requires

further elaboration, as here we have the kernel of Aristotle's philosophy and also, I may add, its originality.

The device which Aristotle employed to show that the power to evolve is an integral part of the reality of anything is to distinguish in reality two aspects, called by him respectively, matter and form. Every reality is both matter and form—matter in so far as it has not been able to *be* what it is capable of being, and form in so far as it has been what it is capable of being. But every form is also matter in relation to its further capabilities of being. The real meaning of all evolution, in fact, is that it perpetually converts matter into form. Let us hear what Mure has to say on this subject :

“Matter stands out as a positive constituent (a positive of the form) within the concrete, only so far as the latter is still something potential : in relation to the yet unrealized climax, the matter of the concrete is the measure of its failure to become form. And even this apparently positive and constitutive character which matter bears is due to form. For that which at any given stage of development we see as matter becoming actualized—or, we may now say, “in-formed”—is, relatively to its past stages, already in-formed matter. The bronze which is matter to the sculptor is already a structure informing the simpler elements that go to compose it”. (16)

This continual conversion of matter into form constitutes the teleology of the world process. The world process is teleological—this is the great truth discovered by Aristotle. Western teleology may be said to have its origin in Aristotle, though Plato's idea of good may be said to be its godfather, as it lays the foundation of the axiological standpoint in philosophy. Plato, as we have seen, had to contend with certain difficulties in his philosophy which did not enable him to bring the world of particulars into intimate relationship with the world of ideas, though in his later years he made an attempt to bring the two closer together by modifying the transcendent character of the ideas.

It is one of the tragedies of the history of philosophy, however, that although basically Aristotle's philosophy rested on the teleological conception of the universe, yet due to what Gomperz has called the encyclopaedist tendency in him, the separate branches of knowledge fell away from the main stream and became almost isolated lakes with

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only a nominal connection with the central reservoir from which they all flowed.

One disastrous consequence of this was that his logic and his metaphysics fell apart. In his logic he reverted to the rigidity of the Platonic ideas in their earlier form. His logic was a logic of forms, a rigid and inelastic logic, which by its very nature was incompetent to grasp the richness and fulness of living experience. It is indeed an irony of fate that the philosopher who protested most vehemently against the abstract character of the Platonic ideas and their want of connection with the world of our daily experience, should himself in his logical works show the same love for abstractions and the same indifference to living experience which he found fault with in Plato. Yet that is one of the tragedies which the history of philosophy has exhibited. In his logical works Aristotle was a pure Platonist, sticking rigidly to logical forms. But in his metaphysics, in his conception of matter continuously passing into form and in his conception of a teleological order of the universe, he exhibited a standpoint which was an advance upon that of Plato, even upon that of Plato in his later dialogues. This was indeed a great anomaly.

Paradoxical as it may sound, it is these anomalies and tragedies which really show the vitality of the spiritual force working through the history of philosophy. For what Aristotle could not achieve was left to be achieved by other philosophers separated from him by great distances of time.

From Aristotle to Hegel

Aristotle therefore left us with a curious blending of totally diverse strands of thought, of realism and idealism and also of idealism of an abstract, rigid type and idealism of a broader and deeper type, able to establish contact with the world of living experience and detect in it the gradual unfolding of certain ends or values. In fact, it is difficult to find any philosophy which baffles the attempt to classify it as much as Aristotle's philosophy. It is both realism and idealism and also idealism of different types. The net result of his philosophy, therefore, so far as an answer to Plato's demand as expressed in the "Parmenides" is concerned, the demand, namely, for a universal which can be brought into intimate relationship with the particulars, is negative. To trace

the adventures of this demand through the ages in Western philosophy would mean writing a history of that philosophy, which is of course clearly beyond the scope of the present paper. All that we can do is to take a bird's eye view of that philosophy from Aristotle down to Hegel, noting only the chief landmarks.

If we do that, we shall find that this philosophy has met Plato's demand in three different ways : firstly, in empirical philosophy, like that of Hume, by throwing out the universal and looking upon the particular as the sole reality, and thereby rejecting Plato's demand outright as impossible and absurd, secondly, in rationalistic philosophy, like that of Spinoza, by pointing out the impossibility of satisfying Plato's demand through the processes of thought or logic but leaving a way open for other types of consciousness, such as the *scientia intuitiva* or the intellectual love of God, for effecting the synthesis as demanded by Plato, and thirdly, as in Hegel, through a revolutionary change in the methods of logic, by showing that logic itself is competent to satisfy Plato's demand. There are intermediate systems, like those of Leibnitz who, though not rejecting altogether the universal, yet concentrated upon the individual as the source of all reality and effected a loose synthesis of the particular and the universal through the intervention of God as a *deus ex machina*, and Kant, who dealt elaborately with the whole problem and showed how a synthesis of the two is impossible in knowledge which suffers from certain fundamental limitations but who also showed the great importance of the synthesis as a fundamental demand of human thought, a demand, however, which cannot be satisfied by knowledge but which gives rise to certain ideals which he called the Ideas of Pure Reason, which serve the purpose of guiding knowledge but cannot give any object of knowledge. Kant admitted therefore Plato's demand as an essential demand of human consciousness but unfortunately he said it was a demand which human knowledge cannot satisfy and that all that it can do is to keep the demand before it as an ideal for it to strive after. He also showed that although it cannot be satisfied in knowledge, yet the satisfaction of it is an imperative need of our moral life, as also of our enjoyment of beauty and contemplation of the teleological order of the universe.

It was Hegel, however, who made Plato's demand the starting-point of his own philosophy and showed how it could be met by logic. For this he had to make a revolutionary change in the conception of

thought and of logic as the vehicle of its expression. Thought became for him the same as Being, and logic the same as metaphysics. Indeed, the basic idea of his philosophy he expressed by the equation : Logic=Metaphysics. He also introduced into his own philosophy the great principle of evolution which had proved so highly successful in the philosophy of Aristotle. With thought conceived as reality and evolution as the essential characteristic of thought, he proceeded to build up a wonderful system of logic, which was the same as his metaphysics.

Before we proceed further with the details of his logic, it is necessary to understand clearly what Hegel meant by thought. He has himself stated the nature of thought as follows : (17)

“To speak of thought or objective thought as the heart and soul of the world, may seem to be ascribing consciousness to the things of nature. We feel a certain repugnance against making thought the inward function of things, especially as we speak of thought as making the divergence of man from nature. It would be necessary, therefore, if we use the term thought at all, to speak of nature as the system of unconscious thought, or, to use Schelling’s expression, a petrified intelligence.... If thought is the constitutive substance of external things, it is also the universal substance of what is spiritual. In all human perception thought is present ; so too thought is the universal in all the acts of conception and recollection ; in short, in every mental activity, in willing, wishing and the like. All these faculties are only further specializations of thought. When it is presented in this light, thought has a different part to play from what it has if we speak of a faculty of thought, one among a crowd of other faculties, such as perception, conception and will, with which it stands on the same level. When it is seen to be the true universal of all that nature and man contain, it extends its scope far beyond all these, and becomes the basis of everything....

From this long quotation it is quite clear that Hegel understands by thought something very different from what we understand by the term. It is in fact another name for what is the basic human consciousness. All types of consciousness, such as perception, conception and the like are from this point of view modes or forms of this basic consciousness. This thought he looks upon as “the constitutive substance of external

things" and also as "the universal substance of what is spiritual". Thought, therefore, is not merely the subjective thought of a thinking individual, but it is the objective principle which is manifested in everything. It is for this reason that Hegel's philosophy is called Absolute Idealism. It is the most complete form of objective idealism. Its root conception is that what we call the external world is really not external but exhibits the same principle which is at work in our subjective consciousness.

Another root idea of Hegel's philosophy is the idea of evolution. From the lowest reality to the highest there is, according to him, a continuous process of development ; the highest realities representing higher stages of evolution of thought and the lower realities lower stages of its evolution. His philosophy rejects all ideas of any gap. The development from the lowest to the highest is a continuous one, there being no sudden jump anywhere. The whole process can be mapped out, as has indeed been done by him, and this he calls the dialectic of thought. The dialectic is not merely the process of the internal development of thought from its lowest form to its highest, but is at the same time the actual process of the development of the universe from its lowest stages to the highest. Dialectic, therefore is not only logic but it is also metaphysics. In fact, in Hegel's philosophy the two are identical, as we have already seen : Logic=Metaphysics. On this equation Hegel has built the whole of his philosophy.

The nerve-spring of the dialectic, that which makes it evolve, is the principle of the synthesis of opposites. At each step of the process of dialectic, it meets with opposites, but these opposites, far from checking the process, rather help it to evolve further. In fact, evolution means a continuous march through opposites. Thought creates its own opposites, in order to overcome them and through this overcoming, rise to a higher unity with itself. Every process of thought, thus, contains three movements: thesis, or the assertion of itself, antithesis, or the negation of itself, and synthesis, or a higher unity of itself with itself, arising from the overcoming of its negation of itself. This is the famous triadic movement of thought, as expounded by Hegel.

Hegel's thought is not thought as ordinarily understood, but is a sort of revolutionary thought

The thing is, Hegel's thought is not thought as ordinarily under-

stood, but is a sort of revolutionary thought, which he calls 'infinite thought'. Thus, he says : (18)

"But in using the term thought we must not forget the difference between finite or discursive thinking and the thinking which is infinite and rational. The categories, as they meet us *prima facie* and in isolation, are finite forms. But truth is always infinite, and cannot be expressed or presented to consciousness in finite terms. The phrase *infinite thought* may excite surprise, if we adhere to the modern conception that thought is always limited. But it is, speaking rightly, the very essence of thought to be infinite. The nominal explanation of calling a thing finite is that it has an end, that it exists up to a certain point only, when it comes into contact with, and is limited by, its other. The finite, therefore, subsists in reference to its other, which is its negation and presents itself as its limit. Now thought is always in its own sphere ; its relations are with itself, and it is its own objectivity....Thought, as thought, therefore, in its unmixed nature involves no limits, it is finite only when it keeps to limited categories, which it believes to be ultimate".

The thought of Hegel, therefore, is radically different from the categorial thought as understood by Kant. Such a thought has a limit, which is its other. It is not in a position to overcome its opposition to its other, and is therefore limited. The essence of infinite thought, however, is that it is in a position to overcome its other. Or, in other words, there is no other or contradiction for it which it is not in a position to overcome and join with itself.

It is this infinite thought which is identical with reality and which Hegel has in mind when he says that logic and metaphysics are identical. Let us try to grasp the implications of that statement. It means that the law of contradiction, as it is ordinarily understood, cannot be applied to the real world. It is a law of formal thought and has no application to thought which is an expression of reality. In the real world it is impossible to find two things which are related to each other as 'A' and 'not-A' are in formal thought. An example will make this clear. Suppose we take a mountain as our 'A'. What is a 'not-A' here ? What is a not-mountain ? Will you call a man or a horse or a bird a not-mountain ? Does it convey any sense in calling any of these

a not-mountain? The thing is, that in the real world there are no absolute contradictories.

It is not quite true to say that Hegel denied the law of Contradiction. What he denied was the application of that law to the world of reality. If you could find an 'A' and a 'not-A' which are absolute contradictories, then Hegel would not deny that the Law of Contradiction would apply. But Hegel would say that such an 'A' and a 'not-A' exist only in the world of your formal logic. That world is an artificial world, a world of your own creation and does not represent the real world.

Croce in his book *What is living and what is dead of the philosophy of Hegel* has pointed out that Hegel is wrong in taking the world as a world of contradictories and not as a world of contraries. The world, he says, is a world of contraries and not of contradictories, and Hegel's logic applies only to the former and not to the latter. Really speaking, that is indeed what Hegel himself, as we have seen, has said. As I have said elsewhere, (19) "Rightly viewed, this is also the doctrine of Hegel. His rejection of the Law of Contradiction means that the world of the real contains no absolute contradictories. Such contradictories exist only in the realm of abstract thought with which formal logic deals. The thesis and the antithesis of Hegel both exist in the realm of the real; they are not absolute contradictories, as Croce seems to take them to be, but opposite movements of thought which, resting in the same common region, the realm of reality, express different aspects of it which are each one-sided and imperfect and irresistibly point to a synthesis in a higher notion. Croce, therefore, is somewhat unjust to Hegel when he says that the latter has built a logic of contradictories."

The thought of Hegel also contains, as Mure has shown (20), an element of intuition. This gives it that power of direct approach to reality, which is associated with intuition. Armed with this power, it is a very powerful weapon, and Hegel undoubtedly wields it with great success. It does duty in Hegel's system for sensation, perception, reason, will, intuition. It is, in short, an ambivalent principle which performs the functions assigned usually to several types of consciousness. An English poet said :

"Break thou the deep vase of chilling tears
That grief hath shaken into frost"

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But much more than grief is the action of formal logic in shaking into frost the chilling thoughts with which it deals, and Hegel, therefore, like the great English poet, would ask us to get rid of this logic which freezes all our thinking and robs it of that mobility which alone can enable it to probe into the depths of reality.

*In spite of Hegel's best efforts there is an element of formalism
in his philosophy*

Unfortunately, we have to say that in spite of his best efforts Hegel could not avoid formalism in his philosophy. The hierarchical system of categories which he developed in his logic suffers from the same defect which he noticed in formal logic, namely, of being a rigid and closed system. One effect we notice in his rigid adherence to the principle of continuity. This principle in fact runs through the whole of his philosophy. The whole process of the evolution of thought is like that of a bullet fired from a gun. It can be mapped out completely, as it has no surprises or gaps anywhere. There is no place for the emergence of anything new. What, in fact, appears new to us is, from its point of view, only a continuation of the old, a further development of what has gone before. This is the standpoint of Continuous Evolution. Hegel perhaps was the last great champion of it. As I have said elsewhere, (21) it is a characteristic of perennial philosophy in the West, which swears by Reason or Thought. Thought is wedded to the principle of continuity, and Hegel, in spite of his making a revolutionary change in the nature of thought, could not give up the principle of continuity which is one of the sheet-anchors of systems of philosophy based upon Reason or Thought.

Another weakness of the Hegelian philosophy, which is also a direct result of his exclusive adherence to thought, was his neglect of the other forms of consciousness, such as feeling or will. It is true, as Mure has pointed out (to which we have already referred), that Hegel's thought is something more than thought, that it includes, for instance, intuition, but on the whole, the recognition given to these other forms of consciousness is very slight. Hegel's whole edifice is built upon thought.

No doubt it was a gigantic edifice which he built upon it, which cannot but strike us as something marvellous, especially when we con-

template the inherent weaknesses of this mode of consciousness. His philosophy, in fact, is one of the most glorious examples of the truth of the famous saying of Goethe : "In der Beschränkung zeigt sich erst der Meister" ("It is in his fight with limitations that the master first shows himself"). Hegel had to struggle with the fundamental limitations of his chosen instrument, thought. In spite of these limitations, he gave us a wonderful system of philosophy, one of the grandest that the human mind has ever constructed. His greatness we can only realize when we take into account the glaring defects of the instrument which he employed. Hegel, in fact, attempted an impossible task. He took up the challenge thrown by Plato, namely, to construct a system of philosophy in which Being and Becoming, the One and the Many, can dwell together in perfect harmony, and he took it up on behalf of Thought and gave us a system which is a model of coherence and symmetry. But philosophy must first and foremost be an interpretation of Reality, and a system, however coherent and symmetrical it may be, must be pronounced to have failed if it cannot give an adequate interpretation of all the multifarious facets of Reality. From this point of view, we have unfortunately to say that in spite of its grandeur and architectonic beauty, the Hegelian philosophy has failed, but it has failed because its task was an impossible one, namely, to build a philosophy upon the foundations of Thought alone.

From Hegel to Contemporary Western Philosophy

The failure of the Hegelian philosophy led in the West to a reorientation of philosophy on the basis of some principle other than Reason or Thought. This is known as the romantic revolt against the excessive rationalism or logicism of Hegel. Schopenhauer led this revolt, and under his banner gathered other rebels, who, though differing from one another in all other respects, were united in their common hatred of Reason. I have dealt with this story of the romantic revolt elsewhere (22), and I cannot deal with it here. Towards the close of the nineteenth century appeared Bergson, perhaps the greatest anti-rationalist that has ever lived, who, with his principle of intuition, struck very hard blows at the rationalistic structure of philosophy. Unfortunately, his philosophy, although it was very effective as a criticism of rationalism, was not of much value on its positive side. There arose also the philo-

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sophers of values who challenged rationalism on another ground, on the ground, namely, of its ignoring the real task of philosophy, which is to discover the values which satisfy the deeper cravings of the human soul.

The Hegelians, however, did not retreat from the field altogether. In such valiant champions as Green and Caird, they continued to uphold the banner of Reason, but they relied upon appeal to enlightened human experience rather than dialectic for the establishment of their philosophical position. A departure, however, was made by Bradley who again employed the weapon of dialectic for the establishment of his metaphysical standpoint. But it was a dialectic directed against thought, employed for the purpose of showing the limitations of thought. The famous statement of his, that thought must commit suicide if it tries to reach the Absolute, has shaken philosophical thought almost as much as the counter-statement of Hegel, that logic and metaphysics are identical. But it has caused headache also to philosophers, because it is not clear why thought is asked to commit suicide for doing what is its legitimate work. I cannot do better here than quote what I have said in this connection in my book *The meeting of the East and the West in the philosophy of Sri Aurobindo* (23) :

“Before I pass on to deal with the challenge of this world-view of Hegel’s, namely, the world-view of continuity, I have to mention one curious development of the principle of continuity which seeks to demolish with its help the great structure raised by Hegel. I refer to Bradley’s attempt in his *Appearance and Reality* to prove that the very principle of continuity which is the life-breath of thought, proves its destruction. It is a very curious development of his philosophy, of which we were given no warning in his *Principles of Logic*. There we were told that thought could march from judgment to judgment in a triumphal procession and can reach the citadel of the Absolute itself, without coming across any barriers at all. Here, for the first time, without any warning, thought is presented with an ultimatum : Either you stop marching further, or if you are consumed with a desire to trespass into regions where you are not entitled to go, you must drink the hemlock and commit suicide. A very strange ultimatum indeed ! And what did thought do to merit this fate ? Did it change the direction of its march, did it accept the guidance of any other principle than that of continuity or coherence ? Nothing

of the kind. And yet at a certain point of its journey it is asked either to retrace its steps or drink the hemlock....

"It is quite clear that thought meets this fate, not because it does not know how to handle its own weapon, but because it does not know how to handle a weapon which it was never taught to handle. This new weapon is that of discontinuity. Thought is blamed for not being able to deal with a world which presents discordances or discontinuities. One such discordance is mentioned here, namely, the discordance between feeling and thought. In a world full of such discontinuities, how can thought, wedded as it is to the principle of continuity, succeed?"

Limitations of space prevent my mentioning other reactions of contemporary philosophy to Plato's demand, but I cannot conclude this portion of my task without mentioning the attitude of Whitehead. Whitehead has profound regard for Plato, and he is the author of the famous statement that the whole of Western philosophy is nothing but so many footnotes to Plato. He has realized the weakness of Plato's earlier philosophy, in which a system of eternal ideas remains in a cloudland, out of all relation to the world of particulars, and he feels therefore the same need which Plato felt in his later dialogues, of bringing the two worlds into more intimate contact with each other. Like Plato's eternal ideas, he also sets up a world of eternal objects and tries to effect a harmony between this world and the actual world in which we live by means of his twofold conception of God—the conception of a primordial God, who is the ideal realization of the possibilities embodied in the eternal objects, and that of a consequent God, who represents the transformation of the potentialities of the primordial God into actuality. But this transformation is never complete; the consequent God is an eternally unfinished God. Moreover, the consequent God and the world act and react upon each other, so that the perfection of each depends upon the perfection of the other. It is clear therefore that in such a system there cannot be a complete realization of the eternal ideas in the actual world, and therefore, Plato's demand in the "Parmenides" remains unfulfilled.

Solution of the problem posed by Plato in Sri Aurobindo's philosophy

Coming now to Sri Aurobindo's philosophy, we find that it makes

a fundamental departure from both the Western and the Indian conception of logic by its setting up two kinds of logic, a finite logic, which is the logic of thought or reason, and an infinite logic, which is the logic of the supra-mental consciousness. Hitherto the attitude of both Western and Eastern philosophy towards logic has been this: Either you accept logic, which is the logic of reason or thought, or you reject it as incapable of reaching the Absolute. If, therefore, the logic of thought fails to establish the Absolute, there is no alternative left but to declare that the Absolute is beyond the reach of logic, and that, consequently, if it has to be established by means of some principle other than thought. This, we have seen is the clear-cut position of Bradley, and it is the general standpoint of all Western philosophy which postulates an Absolute. It is also the same in our Indian philosophy. The standpoint of our orthodox systems of philosophy, that is, those which believe in the authority of the Vedas and the Upaniṣads, is expressed very clearly in the statement of the Kāthopaniṣad, “नैषातर्केणमतिरापनेया” (“this consciousness is not to be obtained with the help of logic”). So also the verse of the Taittirīya Upaniṣad—“यतोवाचोतिवर्तन्ते प्राप्यमनसासह” (“where words come back with an unfulfilled mind”) states the same thing. Śaṅkara in his commentary on the third Sūtra of Bādarāyaṇa, “शास्त्रयोनित्वात्”, while giving an alternative interpretation, states that Śāstra, that is, the recorded intuitions of the sages, is the only means of having knowledge of Brahman, (24) thus clearly showing that logic is not a means of knowing the Absolute. This standpoint, that logic is not competent to give any knowledge of the ultimate truth, which is therefore above logic, is also beautifully illustrated in a famous conversation between Yudhiṣṭhira and the Python, as recorded in the Vana Parva of the Mahābhārata (25). The Python asked Yudhiṣṭhira : “What is the object of knowledge?”, to which the latter replied : “वेद्यंसर्प परं ब्रह्म निदुःखमसुखं च यत्” (“(O Serpent, the object of knowledge is Brahman, which is neither happiness nor sorrow”). The Python objected to this answer, saying

“वेद्यं यच्चाज्ञ निदुःखमसुखं च नराधिप ।

ताभ्यो हीनं पदं चान्यन्न तदस्तीति लक्ष्यये ॥”

(“If the object of knowledge is neither happiness nor sorrow, O King,

then I don't see how there can be such an object which is neither the one nor the other").

Here the Python represents the standpoint of logic which cannot conceive how there can be anything which is neither happiness nor sorrow, and Yudhiṣṭhira represents the standpoint of the Absolute, which is inaccessible to logic.

Coming now to heterodox Indian systems, that is, systems which do not believe in the authority of the Vedas and the Upaniṣads, we find that in the Mādhyamika system of Buddhism, although reason is employed to reject all other views, yet Śūnyatā is not established by means of reason. It is expressly stated that Śūnyatā is not to be regarded as a view, that is, as a standpoint based upon reason, which can therefore be discussed and either accepted or rejected. Thus, in Kāśyapa Parivarta (26), it is said—

“Him I call the incurable who mistakes Śūnyatā itself as a theory (dṛṣṭi). It is as if a drug, administered to cure a patient, were to remove all disorders, but were itself to foul the stomach by remaining there. Would you, Kāśyapa, consider the patient cured? Likewise, Kāśyapa, Śūnyatā is the antidote for all dogmatic views, but him I declare incurable who misapprehends Śūnyatā itself as a theory.”

Dr. Radhakrishnan in his Henriette Hertz lecture on Gautama the Buddha says : (27)

“It is unwise to insist on seeing nihilism or agnosticism in teachings where another explanation is not merely possible but probably more in accordance with Buddha's ideas and the spirit of the times. It is impossible for any one to have the Buddha's fundamental experience of the deficiency of all things mutable and therefore of human life in so far as it is occupied with passing things without a positive experience of an absolute and immutable good. It is the background against which the emptiness of the contingent and the mutable is apprehended. If Buddha declined to define the nature of this Absolute or if he contented himself with negative definitions, it is only to indicate that absolute being is above all determinations. It is difficult to differentiate this supreme being from the absolute Brahman of Advaita Vedanta or the super-God of Christian mysticism

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as formulated in the writings of the pseudo-Dionysius. Buddha's condemnation of the world of experience is based on the same assumption of the absolute, but he refused to state it as the ground of the depreciation since it is not a matter capable of logical proof".

The words "logical proof" used by Dr Radhakrishnan clearly indicate the standpoint of the Mādhyamika school of Buddhism. Śūnyatā is not established with the help of logic.

Diñnāga also, the celebrated Vijñānvādī Buddhist philosopher, believes that inference or logic applies only to the phenomenal world and has no application to the Absolute (28). The Alaya Vijñāna or the Tathāgatagarbha of Aśvaghōṣa is also not subject to the categories of the intellect and therefore not approachable through logic or reason.

When we come to Jainism, we find that if anything, it is in a better position to meet the challenge of Plato, for, on account of its metaphysical doctrine of Anekāntavāda, or infinite plurality of reality, with its logical or epistemological counterpart, which is called Syādvāda, it delights in accepting the view that every reality is both one and many, being and becoming, and it insists strongly upon maintaining that every view of reality which looks upon it as one and not as many, or as being and not as becoming, is false, is, in fact, what it calls a Nayābhāsa or fallacious judgment, arising from the fact that it takes a particular view or *naya* to be the sole truth about a thing, whereas as a matter of fact, there are innumerable truths about it (29). The only way, therefore, in which we can avoid the fallacy, called Nayābhāsa, is to attach the word 'syāt' or 'may be' to everyone of our judgments. Thus, instead of saying that a thing is hot or cold, we have to say that it may be that it is hot, or it may be that it is cold, the idea being that if we call it hot, we call it from one point of view. We have no right to ignore another point of view from which it can equally be called cold. Thus, for instance, if an inhabitant from Greenland is to come and visit our country even in our cold season, he will call it hot, although we may call it cold.

In a way it is a complete fulfilment of the demand made by Plato, for it says that not only the one and the many, or motion and rest, but all imaginable aspects of a thing—and they are infinite in number—will have to be included if we are to have a full knowledge of it. In another sense it is a *reductio ad absurdum* of this demand, for it shows

the hopelessness of its being realized. Jainism, however, like other systems of Indian philosophy, believes in the possibility of acquiring complete knowledge (kevalajñāna)—which is the prerogative of the liberated soul—by discarding all Nayas. Though this renders nugatory the logic of the Nayas, yet Jainism must be said to have rendered great service to philosophy by pointing out more clearly than any other system has done, that all opposites meet in a concrete reality, and that consequently, the Law of Contradiction has a place only in a world of abstractions.

Sri Aurobindo and the problems raised by Plato

Reverting now to Sri Aurobindo's philosophy, we find that it, like other Indian systems of philosophy, looks upon the problems posed by Plato as incapable of being solved with the help of reason or thought. Reason or thought works under serious handicaps, the most serious being the Law of Contradiction, with its offshoot, the Law of Excluded Middle. But instead of saying that logic fails us here completely and we shall have to employ some other method, such as intuition, etc., he says that though the logic of reason fails us, yet there are higher logics which can be employed here. This is the grand new view which Sri Aurobindo puts before us.

The idea which he introduces is a very novel one which has so far never been put forward by any other philosopher. It follows directly from the principles of his philosophy. We shall understand the significance of the change which he introduces here if we compare his viewpoint with that of Hegel. Hegel defines logic as thought thinking itself. But, says Sri Aurobindo, there is no reason why logic should mean only the logic of thought. Logic may as well be the self-revelation of some consciousness higher than thought. In fact, for Sri Aurobindo, it is the self-revelation of the supramental consciousness. This logic is very different from the logic of thought. Sri Aurobindo therefore has coined the words 'logic of the infinite' to express the great truth that what is important for philosophy is not so much the logic of thought as this higher logic, which is the logic of the supramental consciousness, and may therefore be appropriately called the logic of the infinite, to distinguish it from the logic of thought, which is the logic of the finite.

It is clear that it is a logic far more revolutionary than even the

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logic of Hegel. For although Hegel made radical changes in the structure of logic as it was current in his time, yet the framework was still that of human thought, while the logic of the infinite which Sri Aurobindo has set up, has a framework which is in no way dependent upon that of thought.

There is also reason for thinking that what Plato wanted to do in the "Parmenides" was to hint at such a logic. The logic that was current in his time was the Megarian logic, which was practically the same as the logic of Zeno. His object was to expose the weakness of that logic in order to pave the way for a higher logic not tied to the apron strings of thought. He stopped in this dialogue with merely exposing the hollowness of the Megarian logic. The constructive work of building a higher logic he did not attempt in this dialogue. He partially attempted it in the "Sophist", and in the "Theaetetus" and the "Philebus"; he showed us some of the concrete results of such a logic, in the former case by showing how it would enable us not only to overcome the weaknesses of the Megarian logic but also those of its opposite, namely, the Heraclitean logic of Becoming, and in the latter how it would enable us to build concrete values, such as the good, which would serve as a measuring-rod for determining the values of other things. In fact, the "Parmenides" may be said to be the beginning of the process by which Plato wanted to construct a new logic namely, the logic of values. This logic would at once link the "Parmenides" with the "Republic", where the idea of good, which represents Plato's Absolute, is put forward as a Concrete Value which unites all other values.

Why Sri Aurobindo is not satisfied with the logic of thought

Sri Aurobindo has expressed his dissatisfaction with mind or thought or reason (these three words he uses almost as synonyms) in several places in *The Life Divine* and also in his other works. Thus, in a passage in *The Life Divine*, (30) speaking of the mind's view of Space and Time, he says :

"Our mental view of these two categories is determined by the idea of measure which is inherent in the action of the analytical, dividing movement of Mind. Time is for the Mind a mobile extension measured out by the succession of the past, present and future

in which Mind places itself at a certain standpoint whence it looks before and after. Space is a stable extension measured out by divisibility of substance ; at a certain point in that divisible extension Mind places itself and regards the disposition of substance around it.

“In actual fact Mind measures Time by event and Space by Matter ; but it is possible in pure mentality to disregard the movement of event and the disposition of substance and realise the pure movement of Conscious-Force which constitutes Space and Time ; these two are then merely two aspects of the universal force of Consciousness which in their intertwined interaction comprehend the warp and woof of its action upon itself. And to a consciousness higher than Mind which should regard our past, present and future in one view, containing and not contained in them, not situated at a particular moment of Time for its point of prospection, Time might well offer itself as an eternal present. And to the same consciousness not situated at any particular point of Space, but containing all points and regions in itself, Space also might offer itself as a subjective and indivisible extension—no less subjective than Time. At certain moments we become aware of such an indivisible regard upholding by its immutable self-conscious unity the variations of the universe ; but we must not ask how the contents of Time and Space would present themselves there in their transcendent truth ; for this our mind cannot conceive ; and it is even ready to deny to this Indivisible any possibility of knowing the world in any other way than that of our mind and senses.”

A few pages later, in the same chapter of the same book, he makes a further and a more important distinction between the viewpoint of the Supramental Consciousness and that of the mind : (31)

“This, then, is the first operative principle of the divine Supermind ; it is a cosmic vision which is all-comprehensive, all-pervading, all-inhabiting. Because it comprehends all things in being and static self-awareness, subjective, timeless, spaceless, therefore it comprehends all things in dynamic knowledge and governs their objective self-embodiment in Space and Time.

“In this consciousness the knower, knowledge and the known are not different entities, but fundamentally one. Our mentality

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makes a distinction between these three because without distinctions it cannot proceed ; losing its proper means and fundamental law of action, it becomes motionless and inactive. Therefore, even when I regard myself mentally, I have still to make this distinction. I am, as the knower ; what I observe in myself, I regard as the object of my knowledge, myself yet not myself ; knowledge is an operation by which I link the knower to the known. But the artificiality, the purely practical and utilitarian character of this operation is evident ; it is evident that it does not represent the fundamental truth of things. In reality, I the knower, as the consciousness which knows ; the knowledge is that consciousness, myself, operating ; the known is also myself, a form or movement of the same consciousness. . . .”

The fundamental characteristic of the Supermind is the indivisibility of its consciousness, whereas the characteristic of the Mind is that it splits up the unity of consciousness : (32)

“This indivisibility of the comprehensive Supermind which contains all multiplicity without derogating from its own unity, is a truth upon which we have always to insist, if we are to understand the cosmos and get rid of the initial error of our analytic mentality. A tree evolves out of the seed in which it is already contained, the seed out of the tree ; a fixed law, an invariable process reigns in the permanence of the form of manifestation which we call a tree. The mind regards this phenomenon, this birth, life and reproduction of a tree, as a thing in itself and on that basis studies, classes and explains it. It explains the tree by the seed, the seed by the tree ; it declares a law of Nature. But it has explained nothing ; it has only analysed and recorded the process of a mystery”.

Sri Aurobindo, however, does not reject logic, but gives a supramental logic, which he calls the logic of the infinite

But if mental logic is defective, it does not necessarily mean that all logic is defective. The Absolute, in Sri Aurobindo’s view, operates in accordance with a higher logic. It is wrong to think that its actions are indeterminate. Indeterminacy, in fact, is only another name for mind’s failure to grasp its nature. But it is, from its point of view, not

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indeterminate. It is perfectly determinate ; its operations flow from the law of its own being (svadharma), though this law may not be discernible by our mind. The great mistake of many systems of philosophy lies in thinking that in stepping from the finite to the infinite, you step from determinacy to indeterminacy. The truth is rather the reverse. The infinite is far more determinate than the finite, but its determinacy is of a different character from the determinacy of the finite, for it does not mean following any rigid law fixed by any external agency, but it means following its own law, which is the reverse of rigid, as it is the free expression of a concrete dynamic reality. The finite, moreover, is determinate only up to a very limited extent. Cross these limits, and you are engulfed in hopeless and chaotic incoherence. That is not so, however, with the infinite. There are no limits within which only it manifests its determinacy. Sri Aurobindo is very emphatic on this point. Thus, he says : (33)

“But the being and action of the Infinite must not be therefore regarded as if it were a magic void of all reason ; there is, on the contrary, a greater reason in all the operations of the Infinite, but it is not a mental or intellectual, it is a spiritual and supramental reason ; there is a logic in it, because there are relations and connections infallibly seen and executed ; what is magic to our finite reason is the logic of the Infinite. It is a greater reason, a greater logic because it is more vast, subtle, complex in its operations ; it comprehends all the data which our observation fails to seize ; it deduces from them results which neither our deduction nor induction can anticipate, because our conclusions and inferences have a meagre foundation and are fallible and brittle.”

The greater reason and higher logic may appear irrational and illogical to us, and in fact this is usually the case, but from that we must not jump to the conclusion that it is incoherent or chaotic. To make this clear, Sri Aurobindo goes on saying : (34)

“It is evident that such a Consciousness and Will need not act in harmony with the conclusions of our limited reason or according to a procedure familiar to it and approved of by our constructive notions or in subjection to ethical reason working for a limited and

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fragmentary good ; it might and does admit things deemed by our reason irrational and unethical because that was necessary for the final and total good and for the working out of a cosmic purpose. What seems to us irrational or reprehensible in relation to a partial set of facts; motives, desiderata might be perfectly rational and approvable in relation to a much vaster motive and totality of data and desiderata. Reason with its partial vision sets up constructed conclusions which it strives to turn into general rules of knowledge and action and it compels into its rule by some mental device or gets rid of what does not suit with it ; an infinite Consciousness would have no rules, it would have instead large intrinsic truths governing automatically conclusion and result, but adapting them differently and spontaneously to a different total of circumstances, so that by this pliability and free adaptation it might seem to the narrower faculty to have no standards whatever.”

Here Sri Aurobindo mentions one fundamental difference between the operation of Supramental Consciousness and that of thought. The order and system found in the former is not due to adherence to rigid rules, as it is in the case of thought, but it is due to its freely pursuing larger truths. This is the reason why to thought its operations seem to be irregular and chaotic. This fundamental difference and the consequences that flow from it Sri Aurobindo further stresses in the following passages :

“It is this that makes the difference between our fragmentary mind consciousness constructing integers out of its fractions and an essential and total consciousness, vision and knowledge. It is not indeed possible, so long as we are compelled to use reason as our main support, for it to abdicate altogether in favour of an undeveloped or half-organized intuition ; but it is imperative on us in a consideration of the Infinite and its being and action to enforce on our reason an utmost plasticity and open it to an awareness of the larger states and possibilities of that which we are striving to consider. *It will not do to apply our limited and limiting conclusions to That which is illimitable*” (italics ours).

The last sentence gives us a warning which is very essential. The mode of operation of the Infinite or what may be called the logic of

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the Infinite is not graspable with the help of the principles which govern the logic of the finite.

The Law of Contradiction and Sri Aurobindo's attitude towards it

From what we have said above and from what appears from the passages we have quoted from Sri Aurobindo, it appears that the Law of Contradiction, as it is ordinarily understood, has no place in the logic of the infinite. The Law of Contradiction, in fact, fixes the limits of everything. It cannot therefore have any application to the Infinite Reality, the essential characteristic of which is that it cannot be confined within any limits. Even in the realm of thought, we have seen, it is not wholly applicable, and this is the lesson of the Hegelian philosophy. It can, in fact, operate successfully in formal logic. Even in mental logic, so far as it is more than a logic of forms, the Law of Contradiction does not operate successfully, for the simple reason that even in the real world as conceived by our mind, we cannot point to any two things A and not-A which absolutely exclude each other. It is clear, therefore, that this Law applies only to an artificial world, to a world governed by conventions, where fixed connotations are given to things. The case becomes still worse when we pass from the mental to the Supramental world. The most vital thing about this world is that it revolts against all limitations.

But although the Law of Contradiction does not apply to the Supramental world, yet it is not a world which is incoherent or chaotic. On the contrary, it is far more orderly and coherent than the world in which we live. It is very important to remember that coherence or consistency does not mean merely consistency with a fixed rule or law. We can understand this clearly if we think of the distinction made in Hegelian philosophy between self-consistency and consistency with the self. This is also the kernel of the teaching of the Gītā, which asks us to be consistent with our svabhāva, though it may mean being inconsistent with fixed rules or laws. Consistency with the self means consistency with a concrete dynamic reality which resists being placed within fixed boundaries. Such consistency, therefore, revolts against the idea of self-consistency. Paradoxical as it may sound, the self can only be consistent with itself by being inconsistent as judged by fixed rules or laws. An example will make this clear. A child can only be

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consistent with itself, with its *svabhāva*, if it continues to grow. But growing means outgrowing, becoming inconsistent with what it is at any particular moment. If therefore we draw a picture of the child at any particular time and say that this and nothing else than this, is the child, then the child can only be consistent with itself by being inconsistent with this picture. On the other hand, if the child ceases to grow, then it will be consistent with its picture but it will be inconsistent with itself, with its *svabhāva*. The same is true (only on a grander scale) of consistency or coherence with the Supramental Reality. The world of the Supramental Reality is infinitely more coherent than the world in which we live, but its coherence is with that Infinite Reality and not with any rule or law.

Conclusion

To sum up : The great challenge thrown by Plato in his "Parmenides" to show how the One and the Many, Being and Becoming, Rest and Motion can be reconciled without any violence to any of the opposed notions, has been successfully answered by Sri Aurobindo. He has shown, as nobody before him has done, that their reconciliation can be effected with the help of a logic fundamentally different from the logic of thought or reason, which may be called the logic of the infinite. Hegel also took up the challenge, and constructed a wonderful logic of thought in which he sought to reconcile all these opposites. But there were many gaps in his construction, which clearly proved that the task which he had undertaken was an impossible one, being beyond the power of thought. Perhaps Plato's object was also to hint at the need of a logic more competent to deal with the problem he had posed than thought.

REFERENCES

(1) See Burnet : *Platonism*, pp. 33-34. "It seems to me", says Burnet, "that we are bound, in view of this, to believe that the "theory of ideas" was really taught by Socrates and that he had learnt it at an early age from the Pythagoreans. Further, I cannot doubt that the "Parmenides, which is certainly later in date than the "Republic", is only to be understood as the renunciation of that theory, at least in its original form, by Plato. This is, of course, of the first importance, if it is true, and it is at least certain that Plato never even alludes to the theory again in his published works with the exception of a single brief mention of it put into the mouth of Pythagorean Timaeus". He further says at p. 39 of the same book, "It has been necessary to say something about Socrates, though the subject of these lectures is properly Plato. —The reason is that it must be made clear that the Socratic dialogues of Plato really and truly deal with Socrates and that they are a marvellously accurate and truthful representation of him. If we regard them as giving us the philosophy of Plato himself, we shall never understand him rightly. We must learn, in short, to draw as clear a line as possible between the works of Plato which may be called *dramatic* and which have as their chief object to bring before us the image of Socrates in his daily life and conversation, and the works of the time when Plato was at the head of the Academy".

(2) See Taylor : *Plato, the Man and his Work*, pp. 350-51. Taylor says : "It follows then that the objections urged against the doctrine of sensible things "partaking of" forms are not Plato's own, and are not meant as a serious criticism by himself either of Socrates or of his own earlier theories. They correspond to the objections against Parmenides which Zeno had in view in composing his own work. In other words, we are directed to regard these criticisms as coming from opponents of the theory of "participation" . . . It is in strict keeping with this interpretation that the main part of the objections made by Parmenides to Socrates is not to raise difficulties about the reality of the forms. That he seems to concede. What he criticises is the view of

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Socrates that sensible things "partake of" the forms and have a kind of secondary reality. . . . Plato does not, in this dialogue, offer any answer to these extreme idealists ; he simply sets himself to show that two can play at the game of abstract formal logic, and that he can, if he pleases, play the game better than its professed champions. Their own methods may be applied to their own fundamental doctrine ; let them see how they will like the result. If this is the right way to understand the dialogue, and Plato seems to tell us it is, it follows that the "Parmenides" is, after all, an elaborate *jeu d'esprit* and all interpretations based upon taking it for anything else (including an earlier attempt made by the present writer) are mistaken in principle."

(3) *Vide* The Dialogues of Plato : Jowett's translation, Vol. IV. 3rd. edn., p. 56

(4) See Jowett's summing up of the main purpose of the dialogue : "To sum up, the Parmenides of Plato is a critique, first, of the Platonic Ideas, and secondly, of the Eleatic doctrine of Being. Neither are absolutely denied. But certain difficulties and consequences are shown in the assumption of either, which prove that the Platonic as well as the Eleatic doctrine must be remodelled".

(5) *Ibid*, p. 58

(6) *Ibid*, p. 357

(7) *Ibid*, p. 296. Jowett's words here are worth quoting : "Not-being is a kind of Being, and in a sense co-extensive with Being. And there are as many divisions of Not-being as of Being. To every positive idea—'just', 'beautiful', and the like, there is a corresponding negative idea—'not-just', 'not-beautiful', and the like."

(8) *Ibid*, p. 525.

(9) *Ibid*, Vol. V. Introduction, pp. xxvii.

(10) *Ibid*, pp. xxvii-xxviii.

(11) *Vide Greek Thinkers*, Vol. IV, p. 37.

(12) Aristotle did not give the name "Organon" to any of his works, but that was the name given later to his works on logic, when they were collected after his death, just as the name "metaphysics" was given to his philosophical works.

(13) *Vide Greek Thinkers*. Vol. IV. p. 37.

(14) *Ibid*, p. 38.

(15) Mure : *Aristotle's Philosophy*, pp. 9-10.

(16) *Ibid*, p. 11.

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(17) Hegel : *Logic* (Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences)
Translated by William Wallace, pp. 47-48.

(18) *Ibid*, p. 62.

(19) *Vide Logic of the Real* (Paper contributed to the Indian Philosophical Congress, 1926).

(20) Mure : *Introduction to Hegel*, pp. 114-15.

(21) *Vide The meeting of the East and the West in Sri Aurobindo's Philosophy*, p. 260.

(22) *Vide my book The neo-romantic movement in contemporary philosophy*.

(23) *Vide The meeting of the East and the West in Sri Aurobindo's Philosophy*, pp. 255-56.

(24) See Śaṅkara's commentary on the third Sūtra of Bādarāyaṇa :
“अथवा यथोक्तं ऋग्वेदादि शास्त्रं योनिः कारणं प्रमाणमस्व ब्रह्मणः यथावत्स्वभाविगमे ।
शास्त्रादेव प्रमाणात् जगतो जन्मादिकारणं ब्रह्मादि गम्यत इत्यभिप्रायः ।”

(25) See Mahabharata, Vana Parva, Chap. 182 (Nirvana Parva edition).

(26) See T.R.V. Murti : *Central Philosophy of Buddhism*, p. 164.

(27) See Radhakrishnan : *Gautama, the Buddha*, pp. 46-47, in the Proceedings of the British Academy, Vol. xxiv, London, Humphrey Milford, Amen House, E.C.)

(28) See C.D. Sharma : *Indian Philosophy*, p. 177.

(29) *Vide Mahendra Kumar Nyāyācārya : जैन दर्शन* et seq., where the author has very beautifully explained the thing, although one, may be viewed as infinitely manifold in its innumerable aspects.

(30) *Vide The Life Divine*, Vol. I, pp. 202-3 (Indian edition).

(31) *Ibid*, pp. 207-8.

(32) *Ibid*, pp. 209-10.

(33) *Ibid*, Vol. II, Part I, p. 52.

(34) *Ibid*, p. 54

(35) *Ibid*, p. 55.

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SECTION ONE

RED DOG UNE

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA

ANTIOCHUS,	son of Cleopatra by her first husband Nicanor (dead).
TIMOCLES,	twin brother of Antiochus.
PHAYLLUS,	Chancellor of Syria.
NICANOR,	a prince of the house of Syria and father of Eunice.
PHILOCTETES,	companion of Antiochus.
MELITUS,	King's Chamberlain.
THOAS,	
THERAMENES,	
LEOSTHENES,	
GALLICRATES,	captains of Syrian army
THERAS,	
EREMITE,	
CLEOPATRA,	Queen of Syria, wife of King Antiochus of Syria.
RODOGUNE,	Parthian princess, daughter of King Phraates of Parthia, captive attendant of Cleopatra.
EUNICE,	daughter of prince Nicanor and cousin to the brothers Antiochus and Timo- cles and companion of Cleopatra.
CLEONE,	sister of Phayllus and companion of Cleopatra.
MENTHO,	Egyptian nurse of Antiochus and Timocles.
ZOYLA,	attendant of Cleopatra.

Scene : — The city of Antioch, capital of Syria.

ACT I

Antioch. The Palace, a house by the sea.

Scene 1

The Palace in Antioch; Cleopatra's antechamber. Cleone is seated; to her enters Eunice.

Cleone

Always he lives!

Eunice

No, his disease; not he.
For the divinity that sits in man
From that afflicted body has withdrawn,—
Its pride, its greatness, joy, command, the Power
Unnameable that struggles with its world :
The husk, the creature only lives. But that husk
Has a heart, a mind and all accustomed wants,
And having these must be,—O, it is pitiful,—
Stripped of all real homage, forced to see
That none but Death desires him any more.

Cleone

You pity ?

Eunice

Seems it strange to you ? I pity.
I loved him not,—who did ? But I am human
And feel the touch of tears. A death desired

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Is still a death and man is always man
Although an enemy. If I ever slew,
I think 'twould be with pity in the blow
That it was needed.

Cleone

That's a foolish thought.

Eunice

If it were weakness and delayed the stroke.

Cleone

The Queen waits by him still_?

Eunice

No longer now.
For while officiously she served her lord,
The dying monarch cast a royal look
Of sternness on her. "Cease", he said, "O woman,
To trouble with thy ill-dissembled joy
My passing. Call thy sons ! Before they come
I shall have gone into the shadow. Yet
Too much exult not, lest the angry gods
Chastise thee with the coming of thy sons
At which thou now rejoicest."

Cleone

Where is she then
Or who waits on her ?

Eunice

Rodogune.

Cleone

That slave !

No nobler attendance ?

Eunice

**I think I hear the speech
Of upstarts. Are you, Cleone, of that tribe ?**

Cleone

**I marvel at your strange attraction, Princess!
You fondle and admire a statue of chalk
In a black towel dismally arranged.**

Eunice

**She has roses in her pallor, but they are
The memory of a blush in ivory.
She is all silent, gentle, pale and pure,
Dim-natured with a heart as soft as sleep.**

Cleone

**She is a twilight soul, not frank, not Greek,
Some Magian's daughter full of midnight spells.
I think she is a changeling from the dead.
I hate the sorceress !**

Eunice

**We shall have a king
Who's young, Cleone; Rodogune is fair.
What think you of it, you small bitter heart?**

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Cleone

He will prefer the roses and the day,
I hope !

Eunice

Yourself, you think ? O, see her walk !
A floating lily in moonlight was her sister.

Rodogune enters.

Rodogune

His agony ends at last.

Cleone

Why have you left
Your mistress and your service, Rodogune ?

Rodogune

She will not have me near her now ; she says
I look at her with eyes too wondering and too large.
So she expects alone her husband's end
And her release. Alas, the valiant man,
The king, the trampler of the fields of death !
He called to victory and she ran to him,
He made of conquest his camp-follower. How
He lies forsaken ! None regard his end ;
His flatterers whisper round him, his no more ;
His almost widow smiles. Better would men,
Could they foresee their ending, understand
The need of mercy.

Cleone

My sandal-string is loose;
Kneel down and tie it, Parthian Rodogune.

Eunice

You too may feel the need of mercy yet,
Cleone.

Cleopatra enters swiftly from the corridors of the Palace.

Cleopatra

Antiochus is dead, is dead, and I
Shall see at last the faces of my sons.
O, I could cry upon the palace-tops
My exultation ! Gaze not on me so,
Eunice. I have lived for eighteen years
With silence and my anguished soul within
While all the while a mother's heart in me
Cried for her children's eyelids, wept to touch
The little bodies that with pain I bore.
The long chill dawns came without that joy.
Only my hateful husband and his crown,—
His crown !

Eunice

To the world he was a man august,
High-thoughted, grandiose, valiant. Leave him to death,
And thou enjoy thy children.

Cleopatra

He would not let my children come to me,
Therefore I spit upon his corpse. Eunice,

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Have you not thought sometimes how strange it will feel
To see my tall strong sons come striding in
Who were two lisping babes, two pretty babes?
Sometimes I think they are not changed at all!
And I shall see my small Antiochus
With those sweet sunlight curls, his father's curls,
And eyes in which an infant royalty
Expressed itself in glances, Timocles
Holding his brother's hands and toiling to me
With eyes like flowers wide-opened by the wind
And rosy lips that laugh towards my breast.
Will it not be strange, so sweet and strange ?

Eunice

And when

Will they arrive from Egypt ?

Cleopatra

Ah, Eunice,

From Egypt ! They are here, Eunice.

Eunice

Here !

Cleopatra

Not in this room, dear fool, in Antioch, hid
Where never cruel eyes could come at them.
O, did you think a mother's hungry heart
Could lose one fluttering moment of delight
After such empty years ? Theramenes,—
The swift hawk he is—by that good illness helped

Darted across and brought them. They're here, Eunice !
I saw them not even then, not even then
Could clasp, but now Antiochus is dead,
Is dead, my lips shall kiss them ! Messengers
Abridge the roads with tempest in their hooves
To bring them to me !

Eunice

Imperil not with memories of hate
The hour of thy new-found felicity;
For souls dislodged are dangerous and the gods
Have their caprices.

Cleopatra

Will the Furies stir
Because I hated grim Antiochus ?
When I have slain my kin, then let them wake.
The man who's dead was nothing to my heart :
My husband was Nicanor, my beautiful
High-hearted lord with his bright auburn hair
And open face. When he died miserably
A captive in the hated Parthian's bonds,
My heart was broken. Only for my babes
I knit the pieces strongly to each other,
My little babes whom I must send away
To Egypt far from me ! But for Antiochus
That gloomy, sullen and forbidding soul,
Harsh-featured, hard of heart, rough mud of camps
And marches,—he was never lord of me.
He was a reason of State, an act of policy;
And he exiled my children. You have not been
A mother !

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Eunice

I will love with you, Cleopatra,
Although to hate unwilling.

Cleopatra

Love me, and with me
As much as your pale quiet Parthian's loved
Whom for your sake I have not slain.

Cleone

She too,
The Parthian !—blames you. Was it not she who said,
Your joy will bring a curse upon your sons ?

Cleopatra

Hast thou so little terror ?

Eunice

Never she said it !

Cleopatra

Fear yet; be wise ! I cannot any more
Feel anger ! Never again can grief be born
In this glad world that gives me back my sons.
I can think only of my children's arms.
There is a diphony of music swells
Within me and it cries a double name,
Twin sounds, Antiochus and Timocles
Timocles and Antiochus, the two

Changing their places sweetly like a pair
Of happy lovers in my brain.

Cleone

But which
Shall be our king in Syria ?

Cleopatra

Both shall be kings,
My kings, my little royal faces made
To rule my breast. Upon a meaner throne
What matters who shall reign for both ?

Zoyla enters.

Zoyla

Madam,
The banner floats upon that seaward tower.

Cleopatra

O my soul, fly to perch there ! Shall it not seem
My children's robes as motherwards they run to me
Tired of their distant play ?

She leaves the room followed by Zoyla.

Eunice

You, you, Cleone ! gods are not in the world
If you end happily.

Rodogune

Do not reproach her.
I have no complaint against one human creature ;
Nature and Fate do all.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Eunice

Because you were born.
My Rodogune, to suffer and be sweet
As was Cleone to offend. O snake,
For all thy gold and roses !

Rodogune

I did not think
Her guiltless sons must pay her debt. Account
Is kept in heaven and our own offences
Too heavy a load for us to bear.

Rodogune and Eunice go out.

Cleone

The doll,
The Parthian puppet whom she fondles so,
She hardly has a glance for me ! I am glad
This gloomy, grand Antiochus is dead.
O now for pastime, dances, youth and flowers !
Youth, youth ! for we shall have upon the throne
No grey beard longer, but some glorious boy
Made for delight with whom we shall be young
For ever.

(to Phayllus as he enters)

Rejoice, brother, he is dead.

Phayllus

It was my desire and fear that killed him then ;
For he was nosing into my accounts.

When shall we have these two king-cubs and which
Is the crowned lion ?

Cleone

That is hidden, Phayllus ;
You know it.

Phayllus

I know ; I wish I also knew
Why it was hidden. Perhaps there is no cause
Save the hiding ! Women feign and lie by nature
As the snake coils, no purpose served by it.
Or was it the grim king who'd have it so ?

Cleone

They are in Antioch.

Phayllus

That I knew.

Cleone

You knew ?

Phayllus

Before Queen Cleopatra. They do not sleep
Who govern kingdoms ; they have ears and eyes.

Cleone

Knew and they live !

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Phayllus

Why should one slay in vain ?

A dying man has nothing left to fear
Or hope for. He belongs to other cares.
Whichever of these Syrian cubs be crowned,
He will be hungry, young and African ;
He will need caterers.

Cleone

Shall they not be found ?

Phayllus

In Egypt they have other needs than ours.
There lust's almost as open as feasting is ;
Science and poetry and learned tastes
Are not confined to books, but life's an art.
There are faint mysteries, there are lurid pomps ;
Strong philtres pass and covert drugs. Desire
Is married to fulfilment, pain's enjoyed
And love sometimes procures his prey for death.
He'll want those strange and vivid colours here,
Not dull diplomacies and hard rough arms.
Then who shall look to statecraft's arid needs
If not Phayllus ?

Cleone

We shall rise ?

Phayllus

It is that
I came to learn from you. I have a need for growth ;
I feel a ray come nearer to my brow,

The world expands before me. Wilt thou assist,—
For you have courage, falsehood, brains,—my growth ?
Your own assisted,—that is understood.

Cleone

Because I am near the Queen?

Phayllus

That helps, perhaps,
But falls below the mark at which I aim.
If you were nearer to the King,—why, then !

Cleone

Depend on me.

Phayllus

Cleone, we shall rise.

Scene 2

*The colonnade of a house in Antioch, overlooking the sea.
Antiochus ; Philoctetes.*

Antiochus

The summons comes not and my life still waits.

Philoctetes

Patience, beloved Antiochus. Even now
He fronts the darkness.

Antiochus

Nothing have I spoken
As wishing for his death. His was a mould
That should have been immortal. But since all
Are voyagers to one goal and wishing's vain
To hold one traveller back, I keep my hopes.
O Philoctetes, we who missed his life,
Should have the memory of his end ! Unseen
He goes from us into the shades, unknown :
We are denied his solemn hours.

Philoctetes

All men
Are not like thee, my monarch, and this king
Was great but dangerous as a lion is
Who lives in deserts mightily alone.
Admire him from that distance.

Antiochus

O fear and base suspicion, evillest part
Of Nature, how you spoil our grandiose life !
All heights are lowered, our wide embrace restrained,
God's natural sunshine darkened by your fault.
We were not meant for darkness, plots and hatred
Reading our baseness in another's mind,
But like good wrestlers, hearty comrades, hearty foes,
To take and give in life's great lists together
Blows and embraces.

Philoctetes

A mother's love, a mother's fears
Earn their excuse.

Antiochus

I care not for such love.
O Philoctetes, all this happy night
I could not sleep; for proud dreams came to me
In which I sat on Syria's puissant throne,
Or marched through Parthia with the iron pomps
Of war resounding in my train, or swam
My charger through the Indus undulant,
Or up to Ganges and the torrid south
Restored once more the Syrian monarchy.
It is divinity on earth to be a king.

Philoctetes

But if the weaker prove the elder born ?
If Timocles were Fate's elected king ?

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Antiochus

Dear merry Timocles ! he would not wish
To wear the iron burden of a crown ;
If he has joy, it is enough for him.
Sunshine and laughter and the arms of friends
Guard his fine monarchy of cheerful mind.

Philoctetes

If always Fate were careful to fit in
The nature with the lot ! But she sometimes
Loves these strange contrasts and crude ironies.

Antiochus

Has not nurse Mentho often sworn to me
That I, not he, saw earth the first ?

Philoctetes

And when
Did woman's tongue except in wrath or malice
Deliver truth that's better ?

Antiochus

Philoctetes,
Do you not wish me to be king ?

Philoctetes

Why left I then
Nile in his fields and Egypt slumbering
Couchant upon her sands, but to pursue
Your gallant progress sailing through life's seas

Shattering opponents till your flag flew high
Sole admiral-ship of all this kingly world ?
But since upon this random earth unjust
We travel stumbling to the pyre, not led
By any Power nor any law, and neither
What we desire nor what we deserve
Arrives, but unintelligible dooms
O'ertake us and the travesty of things,
It is better not to hope too much.

Antiochus

It is better
To lift our hopes heaven-high and to extend them
As wide as earth. Heaven did not give me in vain
This royal nature and this kingly form,
These thoughts that wear a crown. They were not meant
For mockery nor to fret a subject's heart.
Do you not hear the ardour of those hooves ?
My kingdom rides to me.

He hastens to the other end of the colonnade.

Philoctetes

O glorious youth
Whose young heroic arms would gird the world,
I like a proud and anxious mother follow,
Desiring, fearing, drawn by cords of hope and love,
Admire and doubt, exult and quake and chide.
She is so glad of her brave, beautiful child,
But trembles lest his courage and his beauty
Alarm the fatal jealousy that watches us
From thrones unseen.

Thoas and Melitus enter from the gates.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Thoas

Are these the Syrian twins ?

Philoctetes

The elder of them only, Antiochus
Of Syria.

Thoas

Son of Nicanor ! Antiochus
The high Seleucid travels the dull stream
And Syria's throne is empty for his heir.

Antiochus

A glorious sun has fallen then from heaven
Saddening the nations, even those he smote.
It is the rule of Nature makes us rise
Despite our hearts replacing what we love,
And I am happy who am called so soon
To rule a nation of such princely men.
Are you not Thoas ?

Thoas

Thoas of Macedon.

Antiochus

Thoas, we shall be friends. Will it be long
Before we march together through the world
To stable our horses in Persepolis ?

*He turns to speak to Timocles who
has just entered and goes into the house.*

Melitus

This is a royal style and kingly brow.

Thoas

The man is royal. What a face looks forth
From under that bright aureole of hair !

Timocles

I greet you, Syrians. Shall I know your names ?

Melitus

Melitus. This is Thoas.

Timocles

Melitus ?

Oh yes, of Macedon.

Melitus

No, Antioch.

Timocles

It is the same.

We talked of you in Alexandria and in Thebes,
All of you famous captains. Your great names
Are known to us, as now yourselves must be
Known and admired and loved.

Melitus

Your courtesy
Overwhelms me; but I am no captain, only

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

The King's poor chamberlain, your servant come
To greet you.

Timocles

Not therefore less a cherished friend
Whose duty helps our daily happiness.
Thoas, your name is in our country's book
Inscribed too deeply to demand poor praise
From one who never yet has drawn his sword
In anger.

Thoas

I am honoured, Prince. Do not forget
Your mother is waiting for you after eighteen years.

Timocles

My mother ! O, I have a mother at last.
You lords shall tell me as we go, how fair
She is or dark like our Egyptian dames,
Noble and tall or else a brevity
Of queenhood. And her face—but that, be sure,
Is the sweet loving face I have seen so often
In Egypt when I lay awake at night
And heard the breezes whispering outside
With many voices in the moonlit hours.
It is late, Thoas, is it not, a child to see
His mother when eighteen years have made him big ?
This, this is Paradise, a mother, friends
And Syria. In our swart Egypt 'twas no life,—
Although I liked it well when I was there;
But O, your Syria ! I have spent whole hours
Watching your gracile Syrian women pass

With their bright splendid faces. And your flowers,
What flowers ! and best of all, your sun, not like
That burning Egypt, but a warmth, a joy
And a kind brightness. It will be all pleasure
To reign in such a country.

Antiochus

(returning from the house)

Let us ride
Into our kingdom.

Timocles

Antioch in sweet Syria,
The realm for gods, and Daphne's golden groves,
And sweet Orontes hastening to the sea !
Ride by me, Melitus, tell me everything.

Scene 3

Cleopatra's antechamber in the palace. Cleopatra seated; Rodogune.

Cleopatra

It is their horsehooves ride into my heart.
It shall be done. What have I any more
To do with hatred? Parthian Rodogune,
Have you forgotten now your former pomps
And princely thoughts in high Persepolis,
Or do your dreams still linger near a throne ?

Rodogune

I think all fallen beings needs must keep
Some dream out of their happier past,—or else
How hard it would be to live !

Cleopatra

O, if some hope survive
In the black midst of care, however small,
We can live, then only, O then only.

Rodogune

Hope !
I have forgotten how men hope.

Cleopatra

Is your life hard
In Syrian Antioch, Rodogune, a slave
To your most bitter foemen ?

Rodogune

Not when you speak
So gently. Always I strive to make it sweet
By outward harmony with circumstance
And a calm soul within that is above
My fortune.

Cleopatra

Parthian, you have borne the hate
My husband's murder bred in me towards all
Your nation. When I felt you with my heel,
I trampled Tigris and Euphrates then
And Parthia suffered. Therefore I let you live
Half-loving in your body my revenge.
But these are cruel and unhappy thoughts
I hope to slay and bury with the past
Which gave them birth. Will you assist me, girl ?
Will you begin with me another life
And other feelings ?

Rodogune

If our fates allow
Which are not gentle.

Cleopatra

My life begins again,
My life begins again in my dear sons
And my dead husband lives. All's sweetly mended.
I do not wish for hatred any more.
The horrible and perilous hands of war
Appal me. O, let our peoples sit at ease

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

In Grecian Antioch and Persepolis,
Mothers and children, clasping those golden heads
Deep, deep within our bosoms, never allow
Their going forth again to bonds and death.
Peace, peace, let us have peace for ever more.

Rodogune

And will peace take me to my father's arms ?

Cleopatra

Or else detain you on a kingly throne.
There are happier fetters.

Rodogune

If it must be so !

Cleopatra

Art thou insensible or fear'st to rise ?
I cannot think that even in barbarous lands
Any called human are so made that they prefer
Serfhood and scourge to an imperial throne.
Or is there such a soul ?

Rodogune

Shall I not know
My husband first ?

Cleopatra

I did not ask your choice,
But gave you a command to be obeyed
Like any other that each day I give.

Rodogune

Shall I be given him as a slave, not wife ?

Cleopatra

You rise, I think, too quickly with your fate.
Or art thou other than I saw or thou
Feignedst to be ? Hast thou been all this while
Only a mask of smooth servility,
Thou subtle barbarian ?

Rodogune

Speak not so harshly to me
Who spoke so gently now. I will obey.

Cleopatra

Hop'st thou by reigning to reign over me
Restoring on a throne thy Parthian soul ?

Rodogune

What shall I be upon the Syrian throne
Except your first of slaves who am now the last,
The least considered ? I hope not to reign
Nor ever have desired ambitious joys,
Only the love that I have lacked so long
Since I left Parthia.

Cleopatra

Obey me then. Remember,
The hand that seats thee can again unthroned.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Rodogune

I shall remember and I shall obey.

She retires to her station.

Cleopatra

Her flashes of quick pride are quickly past.
After so many cruel, black and pitiless years
Shall not the days to come conspire for joy ?
The Queen shall be my slave, a mind that's trained
To watch for orders, one without a party
In Syria, with no will to take my son from me
Or steal my sovereign station. O, they come !
Slowly, my heart ! break not with too much bliss.

Eunice comes in swiftly.

Eunice

Am I the first to tell you they have come ?

Cleopatra

O girl, thy tongue rain joy upon the world,
That speaks to me of heaven !

Cleone enters.

Cleone
(to *Eunice*)

They are more beautiful than heaven and earth.

(to *Cleopatra*)

Thy children's feet are on the palace stairs.

Cleopatra

O no ! not of the palace but my heart ;
I feel their tread ascending. Be still, be still,
Thou flutterer in my breast. I am a queen
And must not hear thee.

*Thoas and Melitus enter bringing in
Antiochus and Timocles.*

Thoas

Queen, we bring her sons
To Cleopatra.

Cleopatra

I thank you both ; approach.
Why dost thou beat so hard within to choke me ?

*She motions to them to stop and
gazes on them in silence.*

Timocles

This is my mother. She is what I dreamed !

Eunice

O high inhabitants of Greek Olympus,
Which of you all comes flashing down from heaven
To snare us mortals with this earthly gaze,
These simulations of humanity ?

Cleopatra

Say to the Syrians they shall know their king

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

In the gods' time and hour. But these first days
Are for a mother.

Thoas

None shall grudge them to thee,
Remembering the gods' debt to thee, Cleopatra.

Thoas and Melitus leave the chamber.

Cleopatra

My children, O my children, my sweet children !
Come to me, come to me, come into my arms.
You beautiful, you bright, you tall heart-snarers,
You are all your father.

Timocles

Mother, my sweet mother !
I have been dreaming of you all these years,
Mother !

Cleopatra

And was the dream too fair, my child ?
O strange, sweet bitterness that I must ask
My child his name !

Timocles

I am your Timocles.

Cleopatra

You first within my arms ! O right, 'tis right.
It is your privilege, my sweet one. Kiss me.

O yet again, my young son Timocles.
O bliss, to feel the limbs that I have borne
Within me ! O my young radiant Timocles,
You have outgrown to lie upon my lap :
I have not had that mother's happiness.

Timocles

Mother, I am still your little Timocles
Playing at bigness. You shall not refuse me
The sweet dependent state which I have lost
In that far motherless Egypt where I pined.

Cleopatra

And like a child too, little one, you'd have
All of your mother to yourself. Must I
Then thrust you from me ? Let Antiochus,
My tall Antiochus have now his share.

Rodogune

He is all high and beautiful like heaven
From which he came. I have not seen before
A thing so mighty.

Antiochus

Madam, I seek your blessing ; let me kneel
To have it.

Cleopatra

Kneel ! O, in my bosom, son.
Have you too dreamed of me, Antiochus ?

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Antiochus

Of great Nicanor's widow and the Queen
Of Syria and my sacred fount of life.

Cleopatra

These are cold haughty names, Antiochus.
Not of your mother, not of your dear mother ?

Antiochus

You were for me the thought of motherhood,
A noble thing and sacred. This I loved.

Cleopatra

No more ? Are you so cold in speech, my son ?
O son Antiochus, you have received
Your father's face ; I hope you have his heart.
Do you not love me ?

Antiochus

Surely I hope to love.

Cleopatra

You hope !

Antiochus

O madam, do not press my words.

Cleopatra

I do press them. Your words, your lips, your heart,
Your radiant body noble as a god's

I, I made in my womb, to give them light
Bore agony. I have a claim upon them all.
You do not love me ?

Antiochus

The thought of you I have loved,
Honoured and cherished. By your own decree
We have been to each other only thoughts ;
But now we meet. I trust I shall not fail
In duty, love and reverence to my mother.

Eunice

His look is royal, but his speech is cold.

Rodogune

Should he debase his godhead with a lie ?
She is to blame and her unjust demand.

Cleopatra

It is well. My heart half slew me for only this !
O Timocles, my little Timocles,
Let me again embrace you, let me feel
My child who dreamed of me for eighteen years
In Egypt. Sit down here against my knee
And tell me of Egypt,—Egypt where I was born,
Egypt where my sweet sons were kept from me !
Dear Egypt, hateful Egypt !

Timocles

I loved it well because it bore my mother,
But not so well, my mother far from me.

Cleopatra

What was your life there ? your mornings and your even:
Your dreams at night, I must possess them all,
All the sweet years my arms have lost. Did you
Rising in those clear mornings see the Nile,
Our father Nile, flow through the solemn azure
Past the great temples in the sands of Egypt ?
You have seen hundred-gated Thebes, my Thebes,
And my high tower where I would sit at eve
Watching your kindred sun ? And Alexandria
With the white multitude of sails ? My brother,
The royal Ptolemy, did he not love
To clasp his sister in your little limbs ?
There is so much to talk of; but not now !
Eunice, take them from me for a while.
Take Rodogune and call the other slaves.
Let them array my sons like the great kings
They should have been so long. Go, son Antiochus;
Go, Timocles, my little Timocles.

Antiochus

We are the future's greatness, therefore owe
Some duty to the grandeurs of the past.
The great Antiochus lies hardly cold,
Garbed for his journey. I would kneel by him
And draw his mightiness into my soul
Before the gloomy shades have taken away
What earth could hardly value.

Eunice

This was a stab.
Is there some cold ironic god at work ?

Cleopatra

The great Antiochus ! Of him you dreamed ?
You are his nephew ! Parthian, take the prince
To the dead King's death-chamber, then to his own.

Antiochus

She was the Parthian ! Great Antiochus,
Syria thou leav'st me and her and Persia afterwards
To be my lovely captive.

He goes out with Rodogune.

Timocles

(as he follows Eunice)

Tell me, cousin,—
I knew not I had such sweet cousins here,—
Was this the Parthian princess Rodogune ?

Eunice

Phraates' daughter, Prince, your mother's slave.

Timocles

There are lovelier faces then than Syria owns.

He goes out with Eunice.

Cleopatra

You gods, you gods in heaven, you give us hearts
For life to trample on ! I am sick, Cleone.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Cleone

Why, Madam, what a son you have in him,
The joyous fair-faced Timocles, yet you are sick !

Cleopatra

But the other, O the other ! Antiochus !
He has the face that gives my husband back to me,
But does not love me.

Cleone

Yet he will be king.
You said he was the elder.

Cleopatra

Did I say it ?
I was perplexed.

Cleone

He will be king, a man
With a cold joyless heart and thrust you back
Into some distant corner of your house
And rule instead and fill with clamorous war
Syria and Parthia and the banks of Indus
Taking our lovers and our sons to death !
Our sons ! Perhaps he will take Timocles
And offer him, a lovely sacrifice,
To the grim god of battles.

Cleopatra

My Timocles ! my only joy ! Oh, no !

We will have peace henceforth and bloodless dawns,
My envoys ride today.

Cleone

He will recall them.
This is no man to rest in peaceful ease
While other sceptres sway the neighbouring realms.
War and Ambition from his eyes look forth;
His hand was made to grasp a sword-hilt. Queen,
Prevent it; let our Timocles be king.

Cleopatra

What did you say ? Have you gone mad, Cleone ?
The gods would never bless such vile deceit.
O, if it could have been ! but it cannot.

Cleone

It must.
Timocles dead, you a neglected mother,
A queen dethroned, with one unloving child,—
Childless were better,—and your age as lonely
As these long nineteen years have been. Then you had hope,
You will have none hereafter.

Cleopatra

If I thought that,
I would transgress all laws yet known or made
And dare Heaven's utmost anger. Gods who mock me,
I will not suffer to all time your wrongs.
Hush, hush, Cleone ! It shall not be so.
I thought my heart would break with joy, but now

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

What different passion tugs at my heart-strings,
Cleone, O Cleone ! O my sweet dreams,
Where have you gone yielding to pangs and fears
Your happy empire ? Am I she who left
Laughing the death-bed of Antiochus ?

She goes into her chamber.

Cleone

We must have roses, sunlight, laughter, Prince,
Not cold, harsh light of arms. Your laurels, laurels !
We'll blast them quickly with a good Greek lie.
Where he has gone, admire Antiochus,
Not here repeat him.

ACT II

The Palace in Antioch.

Scene 1

*A hall in the palace.
Cleone ; Phayllus.*

Phayllus

Worry the conscience of the Queen to death
Like the good bitch thou art. If this goes well,
I may sit unobserved on Syria's throne.

Cleone

Do not forget me.

Phayllus

Do not forget thyself,
Then how shall I forget thee ?

Cleone

I shall remember.

Phayllus

If for a game you are the queen, Cleone,
And I your minister, how would you start
Your play of reigning ?

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Cleone

I would have many perfect tortures made
To hurt the Parthian with, for every nerve
A torture. I would lie in flowers the while
Drinking sweet Cyprian wine and hear her moan.

Phayllus

I do not like your thought, have better ones.

Cleone

Shall I not satisfy my love, my hate ?
Then just as well I might not reign at all.

Phayllus

O hatred, love and wrath, you instruments
By which we are driven ! Cleone, the gods use these
For their own purposes, not we for ours.

Cleone

I'll do my will, Phayllus; you do yours.

Phayllus

Our kingdom being won ! It is not, yet.

(turning away)

She's too violent for my calmer ends;
Lust drives her, not ambition. I wait on you,
You gods who choose. If Fate intends my rise,
She will provide the instruments and cause.

Timocles enters from the inner palace.

RODOGUNE

Act Two Scene One

Timocles

I think I am afraid to speak to her.
I never felt so with the Egyptian girls
In Thebes or Alexandria. Are you not
Phayllus ?

Phayllus

You remember faces well,
And have the trick for names, the monarch's trick.

Timocles

Antiochus, all say, will be the king.

Phayllus

But I say otherwise and what I say
Has a strange gift of happening.

Timocles

You're my friend !

Phayllus

My own and therefore yours.

Timocles

This is your sister ?

Phayllus

Cleone.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Timocles

A name that in its sound agrees
With Syria's roses. Are you too my friend,
Cleone ?

Cleone

Your subject, prince.

Timocles

And why not both ?

Cleone

To serve is better.

Timocles

Shall I try your will ?

(embracing her)

Thou art warm fire against the lips, thou rose,
Cleone.

Cleone

May I test in turn ?

Timocles

Oh, do !

Cleone

A rose examines by her thorns,—as thus.

She strikes him lightly on the cheek and goes out.

RODOGUNE

Act Two Scene One

Timocles

(looking uncertainly at Phayllus who is stroking his chin)

It was a courtesy,—our Egyptian way.

Phayllus

Hers was the Syrian. Do not excuse yourself;
I am her brother.

Timocles

(turns as if to go, hesitates, then comes back)

Oh, have you met, Phayllus,
A Parthian lady here named Rodogune ?

Phayllus

Blows the wind east ? But if it brings me good,
Let it blow where it will. I know the child.
She's fair. You'd have her ?

Timocles

Fie on you, Phayllus !

Phayllus

Prince, I have a plain tongue which, when I hunger,
Owns that there is a belly. Speak in your language !
I understand men's phrases though I use them not.

Timocles

Think not that evil ! she is not like those,
The common flowers which have a fair outside

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Of beauty, but the common hand can pluck.
We wear such lightly, smell and throw away.
She is not like them.

Phayllus

No ? Yet are they all
Born from one mother Nature. What if she wears
The quick barbarian's robe called modesty ?
There is a woman always in the end
Behind that shimmering. Pluck the robe, 'twill fall;
Then is she Nature's still.

Timocles

I have seen her eyes, they are a liquid purity.

Phayllus

And yet a fish swims there which men call love,
But truth names lust or passion. Fear not, prince;
The fish will rise to such an angler's cast.

Timocles

Mistake me not, nor her. These things are done,
But not with such as she; she is heaven-pure
And must like heaven be by worship won.

Phayllus

What is it then that you desire of her
Or ask of me ? I can do always much.

Timocles

O nothing else but this, only to kneel,
Look up at her and touch the little hand

That fluttered like a moonlit butterfly
About my mother's hair. If she consenting smiled
A little, I might even dare so much.

Phayllus

Why, she's your slave-girl !

Timocles

I shall kneel to her
Some day and feel her hand upon my brow.

Phayllus

What animal this is, I hardly know,
But know it is the animal for me :
My genius tells me, Prince, I need a bribe
Before I'll stir in this.

Timocles

What bribe, Phayllus ?

Phayllus

A name,—your friend.

Timocles

O more than merely friend !
Bring me into the temple dim and pure
Whence my own hopes and fears now bar me out,
Then I am yours, Phayllus, you myself
For all things.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Phayllus

Remember me when you have any need.

He goes out.

Timocles

I have a friend ! He is the very first
Who was not conquered by Antiochus.
Now has this love like lightning leaped at me !

Scene 2

The same.

Eunice, Rodogune.

Rodogune

Heaven had a purpose in my servitude !
I will believe it.

Eunice

One sees not now such men.
What a calm royalty his glances wield !
We are their subjects. And he treads the earth
As if it were already his.

Rodogune

All must be.
I have lived a slave, yet always held myself
A nobler spirit than my Grecian lords ;
But when he spoke, O when he looked at me,
I felt indeed the touch of servitude
And this time loved it.

Eunice

O, you too, Rodogune !

Rodogune

I too ! What do you mean ? Are you, Eunice—

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Eunice

I mean our thorny rose Cleone too
Has fallen in love with pretty Timocles.

Rodogune

You slanderer ! But I thought a nearer thing
That ran like terror through my heart.

Eunice

And so

You love him ?

Rodogune

What have I said, Eunice ? What have I said ?
I did not say it.

Eunice

You did not say it, no !
You lovely fool, hide love with blushes then
And lower over your liquid love-filled eyes
Their frightened lashes ! Quake, my antelope !
I'll have revenge at least. O sweet, sweet heart,
My delicate Parthian ! I shall never have
Another love but only Rodogune,
My beautiful barbarian Rodogune
With the tall dainty grace and the large eyes
And vague faint pallor just like twilit ivory.

Rodogune

My own Eunice !

They embrace. Phayllus enters.

Phayllus

(stroking his chin)

I always hated waste.

Eunice

Your steps too steal, Phayllus ?

Phayllus

I have a mes sage.

Eunice

I do not like the envoy. Find another
And I will hear it.

Phayllus

Come, you put me out.

Eunice

Of your accounts ? They say there is too much
You have put out already for your credit.

Phayllus

You're called. The Queen's in haste, Cleone said.

Eunice goes.

Parthian, will you be Syria's queen or no ?
I startle you. The royal Timocles
By your beauty strives ensnared. Don not your mask

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Of modesty, keep that for Timocles.
I offer you a treaty. By my help
You can advance your foot to Syria's throne :
His bed's the staircase and you shall ascend,
Nor will I rest till you are seated there.
Come, have I helped you ? Shall we be allies ?

Rodogune

You speak a language that I will not hear.

Phayllus

Oh, language ! you're for language, all of you.
Are you not Parthia's daughter ? Do you not wish
To sit upon a throne ?

Rodogune

Not by your help,
Nor as the bride of Syrian Timocles.
What are these things you speak ?

Phayllus

Weigh not my speech,
But only my sincerity. I have a tongue
Displeasing to all women. Heed not that !
My heart is good, my meaning better still.

Rodogune

Perhaps ! But know I yearn not for a throne.
And if I did, Antiochus is king
And not this younger radiance.

Phayllus

That's your reason ?

You are deceived. Besides he loves you not
Nor ever will put on a female yoke.
Prefer this woman's clay, this Timocles
And by my help you shall have empire, joy,
All the heart needs, the pleasures bodies use.

Rodogune

I need no empire save my high-throned heart,
I seek no power save that of sceptred love,
I ask no help beyond what Ormuzd gives.
Enough. I thank you.

Phayllus

You're subtler than these Greeks.
Must he then pine ? Shall he not plead his cause ?

Rodogune

I would not have him waste his heart in pain
If what you say is true. Let him then know
This cannot be.

Phayllus

He will not take from me
An answer you yourself alone can give.
I think you parry to be more attacked.

Rodogune

Think what you will, but leave me.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Phayllus

If you mean that,
The way to show it is to let him come.
You feign and do not mean this, or else you would
Deny him to his face.

Rodogune

(flushing angrily)

I will, tell him to come.

Phayllus

I thought so. Come he shall. Remember me.

He goes out.

Rodogune

I did not well to bid him come to me.
It is some passing fancy of the blood.
I do not hear that he was ever hurt
But danced a radiant and inconstant moth
Above the Egyptian blossoms.

*Timocles enters hastily, hesitates, then
rushes and throws himself at the feet
of Rodogune.*

Timocles

Rodogune !

I love thee, princess ; thou hast made me mad.
I know not what I do nor what I speak.
What dreadful god has seized upon my heart ?

I am not Timocles and not my own,
 But am a fire and am a raging wind
 To seize on thee and am a driven leaf.
 O Rodogune, turn not away from me.
 Forgive me, O forgive me. I cannot help it
 If thou hast made me love thee. Tremble not,
 Nor grow so pale and look with panic glances
 As if a fire had clutched thee by the robe.
 I am thy menial, thy poor trembling slave
 And thou canst slay me with a passing frown.

Rodogune

Touch not my hand ! 'tis sacred from thy touch !

Timocles

It is most sacred ; even the roseate nail
 Of thee, O thou pale goddess, is a mystery
 And a strange holiness. Scorched be his hand
 Who dares with lightest sacrilegious touch
 Profane thee, O deep-hearted miracle,
 Unless thy glorious eyes condone the fault
 By growing tender. O thou wondrous Parthian,
 Fear not my love ; it grows a cloistered worship.
 See, I can leave thee ! see, I can retire.
 Look once on me, one look is food enough
 For many twelve months.

Eunice returns.

Eunice

You wrong your mother, cousin.
 Her moments linger when you are not there ;
 Always she asks for you.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Timocles

My mother ! you gods,
Forbid it, lest I weary of her love.

He goes.

Eunice

What was this ? Speak.

Rodogune

Was Fate not satisfied
With my captivity ? Waits worse behind ?
It was a grey and clouded sky before
And bleak enough but quiet. Now I see
Fresh clouds come stored with thunder toiling up
From a black-piled horizon.

Eunice

Tell me all.
What said Phayllus to you, the dire knave
Who speaks to poison ?

Rodogune

He spoke of love and thrones and Timocles;
He spoke as selfish cunning men may speak
Who mean some evil they call good.

Eunice

And how
Came Timocles behind him ?

Rodogune

Called by him,
With such wild passion burning under his lids
I never thought to see in human eyes.
What are these movements ?

Eunice

We move as we must,
Not as we choose, whatever we may think.
Your beauty is a torch you needs must carry
About the world with you. You cannot help it
If it burns kingdoms.

Rodogune

I pray it may not. God who only rulest,
Let not the evil spirit use my love
To bring misfortune on Antiochus.

Mentho enters.

Mentho

Which is the Parthian ?

Eunice

She.

Mentho

Antiochus

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Desires you in his chamber with a bowl
Of Lesbian vintage.

Eunice

Does he desire ? The gods then choose their hour
For intervention. Move, you Parthian piece.

Rodogune

Send someone else. I cannot go.

Eunice

I think
You have forgotten that you are a slave.
You are my piece and I will have you move.
Move quickly.

Rodogune

Surely he did not speak my name ?

Mentho

Why do you fear, my child ? He's good and noble
And kind in speech and gentle to his servants.

Rodogune

(low, to herself)

It is not him I fear, it is myself.

Eunice

Fear me instead. You shall be cruelly whipped
Unless you move this instant.

Rodogune

Oh, Eunice !

Eunice

Whipped savagely ! I'll sacrifice so much
For a shy pawn who will not move ? Go, go,
And come not back unkissed if you are wise.

*She pushes Rodogune to the door and she goes
followed by Mentho.*

His heart's not free, nor hers, or else I'd try
My hand at reigning. As the gods choose through her,
I may rule Syria.

Scene 3

Antiochus' chamber.

Antiochus, with a map before him.

Antiochus

Ecbatana, Susa, and Sogdiana,
The Aryan country which the Indus bounds,
Euphrates stream and Tigris' golden sands,
The Oxus and Jaxartes and these mountains
Vague and enormous shouldering the moon
With all their dim beyond of nations huge;
This were an empire ! What are Syria, Greece
And the blue litoral to Gades ? They are
Too narrow to contain my soul, too petty
To satisfy its hunger and its vastness.
O pale sweet Parthian face with liquid eyes
Mid darkest masses and O gracious limbs
Obscuring this epitome of earth,
You will not let me fix my eyes on Susa.
I never yearned for any woman yet.
While Timocles with the light Theban dames
Amused his careless heart, I walked aside;
Parthia and Greece became my mistresses.
But now my heart is filled with one pale girl.
Exult not, archer, I will quiet thee
With sudden and assured possession first,
Then keep thee beating an eternal strain.
I have loved her through past lives and many ages.
The Parthian princess, lovely Rodogune!
O name of sweetness ! Renowned Phraates' daughter,
A bud of kings,—my glorious prisoner

RODOGUNE

Act Two. Scene Three

With those beseeching eyes. O high Antiochus,
Who snatched her from among her guardian spears,
Thou hast gone past but left this prophecy
Of beautiful conquered Persia grown my slave
To love me. It is thou, my Rodogune !

Rodogune enters.

Rodogune

(with lowered eyes)

I have brought the wine.

Antiochus

Thou art the only wine,
O Parthian ! Wine to flush Olympian souls
Is in this glorious flask. Set down the bowl.
Lift up instead thy long and liquid eyes;
I grudge them to the marble Rodogune.
Thou knowest well why I have sent for thee.
Have we not gazed into each other's eyes
And thine confessed their knowledge ?

Rodogune

Prince, I am

Thy mother's slave.

Antiochus

Mine, mine, O Rodogune,
For I am Syria.

Rodogune

Thine.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Antiochus

O, thou hast spoken !

Rodogune

Touch me not, touch me not, Antiochus !
Son of Nicanor, spare me, spare thyself.
O me ! I know the gods prepare some death;
I am a living misfortune.

Antiochus

Wert thou my fate
Of death itself, delightful Rodogune,
Not, as thou art, heaven's pledge of bliss, I'd not abstain
From thy delight, but have my joy of thee
The short while it is possible on earth.
O, play not with the hours, my Rodogune.
Why should brief man defer his joys and wait
As if life were eternal? Time does not pause,
Death does not tarry.

Rodogune

Alas !

Antiochus

Thou lingerest yet.
Wilt thou deny the beating of our hearts
That call to us to bridge these sundering paces ?
O, then I will command thee as a slave.
Thou would'st not let me draw thee, come thyself
Into my arms, O perfect Rodogune,
My Parthian captive !

Rodogune

Antiochus, my king !

Antiochus

So heave against me like a wave for ever.
Melt warmly into my bosom like the Spring,
O honied breathing tumult !

Rodogune

O release me !

Antiochus

Thou sudden sorceress, die upon my breast !
My arms are cords to bind thee to this stake,
Slowly to burn away in crimson fire.

Rodogune

Release me, O release me !

Antiochus

Not till our lips have joined
Eternal wedlock. With this stamp and this
And many more I'll seal thee to myself.
Eternal Time's too short for all the kisses
I yearn for from thee, O pale loveliness,
Dim mystery ! Press thy lips to mine. Obey.
Again ! and so again and even for ever
Chant love, O marvel, let thy lips' wild music
Come faltering from thy heart into my bosom.

Rodogune sinks at his feet and embraces his knees.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Rodogune

I am thine, thine, thine, thine for ever.

She rises and hides her face in her hands.

Antiochus

(uncovering her face)

Hide not thy face from love. The gods in heaven
Look down on us; let us look up at them
With fearless eyes of candid joy and tell them
Not Time nor any of their dooms can move us now.
The passion of oneness two hearts are this moment
Denies the steps of death for ever.

Rodogune

My heart
Stops in me. I can bear no more of bliss.
O, leave me now that I may live for thee.

Antiochus

Stay where thou art. Or go, for thou art mine
And I can send thee from me when I will
And call thee when I will. Go, Rodogune
Who yet remain with me.

Rodogune leaves the chamber with faltering steps.

O Love, thou art
Diviner in the enjoying. Can I now
Unblinded scan this map ? No, she is there;
It is her eyes I see and not Ecbatana.

Scene 4

The hall in the palace.

Timocles ; Phayllus.

Timocles

O, all the sweetness and the glory gathered
Into one smiling life, the others left
Barren, unbearable, bleak, desolate,
A hell of silence and of emptiness
Impossible for mortal souls to imagine,
Much less to suffer. My mother does this wrong to me
Why should not we, kind brothers all our lives,—
O, how we loved each other there in Egypt !—
Divide this prize ? Let his be Syria's crown,—
Oh, let him take it ! I have Rodogune.

Phayllus

He will consent ?

Timocles

Oh, yes, and with a smile.
He is all loftiness and warlike thoughts.
My high Antiochus ! how could I dream
Of taking from him what he'd wear so well ?
Let me have love and joy and Rodogune.
The sunlight is enough for me.

Phayllus

It may be,
Yet not enough for both. Look ! there he comes

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Carrying himself as if he were the sun
Brilliant alone in heaven. Oh, that to darken !

*Antiochus*enters.*

Timocles

Brother, it is the kind gods send you here.

Antiochus

Dear Timocles, we meet not all the day.
It was not so in Egypt. Tell me now,
What were you doing all these busy hours ?
How many laughing girls of this fair land
Have you lured on to love you ?

Timocles

Have you not heard ?

Antiochus

What, Timocles ?

Timocles

Our mother gives the crown
And with the crown apportions Rodogune.

Antiochus

Our royal mother ? Are they hers to give ?
I do not marry by another's will.

Timocles

O brother, no ; our hearts at least are ours.

RODOGUNE

Act Two Scene Four

You have not marked, I think, Antiochus,
This pale sweet Parthian Rodogune ?

Antiochus

(smiling)

No, brother ?

I have not marked, you say ?

Timocles

You are so blind
To woman's beauty. You only woo great deeds
And arms imperial. It is well for me
You rather chose to wed the grandiose earth.
I am ashamed to tell you, dear Antiochus,
I grudged the noble crown that soon will rest
So gloriously upon you. Take it, brother,
But leave me my dim goddess, Rodogune.

Antiochus

Thy goddess ! thine !

Timocles

It is not possible
That you too love her !

Antiochus

What is it to thee whom or what I love ?
Say that I love her not ?

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Timocles

Then is my offer
Just, brotherly, not like this causeless wrath.

Antiochus

Thy wondrous offer ! Of two things that were mine
To fling me over with "There, I want it not,
I'll take the other" !

Timocles

(in a suffocated voice)

Has she made thee king ?

Antiochus

I need no human voice to make me anything,
Who am king by birth and nature. Who else should reign
In Syria ? Thoughtst thou thy light and shallow head
Was meant to wear a crown ?

Timocles

In Egypt you were not like this, Antiochus.

Antiochus

See not the Parthian even in dreams at night !
Remember not her name !

Timocles

She is my mother's slave :
I'll ask for her and have her.

Antiochus

Thou shalt have
My sword across thy heart-strings first. She is
The kingdom's prize and with the kingdom mine.

Timocles

My dream, my goddess with those wondrous eyes !
My sweet veiled star cloistered in her own charm !
I will not yield her to thee, nor the crown,
Not wert thou twenty times my brother.

Phayllus

Capital !
Delightful ! O my fortune ! my kind fortune !

Timocles

Thou lov'st her not who dar'st to think of her
As if she were a prize for any arms,
Thy slave, thy chattel.

Antiochus

Speak not another word.

Phayllus

More ! more ! My star, thou risest o'er this storm.

Antiochus

I pardon thee, my brother Timocles ;
Thy light passions are thy excuse. Henceforth
Offend not. For the Parthian, she is mine

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

And I would keep her though a god desired.
Exalt not thy presumptuous eyes henceforth
Higher than her sandals.

He goes out.

Phayllus

This is your brother !
Shall he not have the crown ?

Timocles

Nor her, nor Syria.

*Rodogune and Eunice enter passing
through the hall.*

Timocles

My Rodogune, my star ! Thou knowest the trade
Which others seek to make of thee. Resist it,
Prevent the insult of this cold award !
Say that thou lov'st me.

Rodogune

Prince, I pity thee,
But cannot love.

She passes out.

Eunice

My cousin Timocles,
All flowers are not for your plucking. Roses
Enough that crave to satisfy your want

Are grown in Syria ; take them. Here be wise ;
Touch not my Parthian blossom.

She passes out.

Timocles

How am I smitten as with a thunderbolt !

Phayllus

Will you be dashed by this ? They make her think
Antiochus will reign in Syria.

Timocles

No,

She loves him.

Phayllus

Is love so quickly born ? Oh, then,
It will as quickly die. Eunice works here
To thwart you ; she is for Antiochus.

Timocles

All, all are for Antiochus, the crown,
And Syria and men's homage, women's hearts
And life and sweetness and my love.

Phayllus

Young prince,
Be more a man. Besiege the girl with gifts
And graces ; woo her like a queen or force her
Like what she is, a slave. Be strong, be sudden,
Forestalling this proud brother.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Timocles

I would not wrong her pure and shrouded soul
Though all the gods in heaven should give me leave.

Phayllus

The graceful, handsome fool ! Then from your mother
Demand her as a gift.

Timocles

(going)

My soul once more
Is hunted by the tempest.

Scene 5

Cleopatra's Chamber.

Cleopatra, Cleone.

I am resolved; but Mentho the Egyptian knows
The true precedence of the twins. Send her to me.

Cleone goes out.

O you high-seated cold divinities,
You sleep sometimes, they say you sleep. Sleep now !
I only loosen what your careless wills
Have tangled.

Mentho enters.

Mentho, sit by me, Mentho,
You have not breathed our secret ? Keep it, Mentho,
Dead in your bosom, buy a queen for slave.

Mentho

Dead ! Can truth die ?

Cleopatra

Ah, Mentho, truth ! But truth
Is often terrible. Justice ! but was ever
Justice yet seen upon the earth ? Man lives
Because he is not just and real right
Dwells not with law and custom but for him
It grows by whose arriving our brief happiness
Is best assured and grief prohibited
For a while to mortals.

Mentho

This is the thing I feared.
O wickedness ! Well, Queen, I understand.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Cleopatra

Not less than you I love Antiochus;
But Timocles seeks Parthian Rodogune.
O, if these brother-loves should turn to hate
And slay us all ! Then rather let thy nursling stand,-
Will he not rule whoever fills the throne ?—
Approved of heaven and earth, indeed a king,
Protector of the weaker Timocles,
His right hand in his wars, his pillar, guard
And sword of action, grand in loyalty,
Kingly in great subjection, famed for love.
Then there shall be no grief for any one
And everything consent to our desires.

Mentho

Queen Cleopatra, shall I speak, shall I
Forget respect ? The God demands my voice.
I tell thee then that thy rash brain has hatched
A wickedness beyond all parallel,
A cold, unmotherly and cruel plot
Thou striv'st in vain to alter with thy words.
O nature self-deceived ! O blinded heart !
It is the husband of thy boasted love,
Woman, thou wrongest in thy son.

Cleopatra

Alas,
Mentho, my nurse, thou knowest not the cause.

Mentho

I do not need to know. Art thou Olympian Zeus ?
Has he given thee his sceptre and his charge

To guide the tangled world ? Wilt thou upset
 His rulings ? wilt thou improve his providence ?
 Are thy light woman's brain and shallow love
 A better guide than his all-seeing eye ?
 O wondrous arrogance of finite men
 Who would know better than omniscient God !
 Beware his thunders and observe his will.
 What he has made strive not to unmake but shun
 The tragical responsibility
 Of such dire error. If from thy act spring death
 And horror, are thy human shoulders fit
 To bear that heavy load ? Observe his will,
 Do right and leave the rest to God above.

Cleopatra

Thy words have moved me.

Mentho

Let thy husband move thee.
 How wilt thou meet him in the solemn shades ?
 Will he not turn his royal face from thee
 Saying, "Murderess of my children, come not near me !"?

Cleopatra

O Mentho, curse me not. My husband's eyes
 Shall meet me with a smile. Mentho, my nurse,
 You will not tell this to Antiochus ?

Mentho

I am not mad nor wicked. Remain fixed
 In this resolve. Dream not that happiness
 Can spring from wicked roots. God overrules
 And Right denied is mighty.

ACT III

The Palace in Antioch.

Scene 1

The Audience Chamber in the Palace.

*Nicanor, Phayllus and others seated ; Eunice, Philoctetes,
Thoas apart near the dais.*

Thoas

Is it patent ? Is he the elder ? do we know ?

Eunice

Should he not rule ?

Thoas

If Fate were wise, he should.

Eunice

Will Timocles sack great Persepolis ?
Sooner, I think, Phraates will couch here,
The mighty, steadfast, patient subtle man,
And from the loiterer take, the sensualist
Antioch of the Seleucidæ.

Thoas

Perhaps.

But shall I rise against the country's laws
That harbours me ? The sword I draw is hers.

Eunice

Are law and justice always one ? Reflect.

Thoas

If justice is offended, I will strike.

He withdraws to another part of the hall.

Eunice

The man is wise, but when ambition's heaped
In a great bosom, Fate takes quickly fire.
It only needs the spark.

Philoctetes

Is it only that
That's needed ? there shall be the spark.

He withdraws.

Eunice

Fate or else Chance
Work out the rest. I have given your powers a lead.

Nicanor, who has drawn near, stops before her.

Nicanor

Your council's finished then ?

Eunice

What council, father ?

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Nicanor

I have seen, though I have not spoken. Meddle not
In things too great for you. This realm and nation
Are not a skein for weaving fine intrigues
In your shut chambers.

Eunice

We have other sports.
What do you mean ?

Nicanor

See less Antiochus.
Carry not there your daring spirit and free rein
To passion and ambition nor your bright scorn
Of every law that checks your headstrong will,
Or must I find a curb that shall restrain you ?

He withdraws.

Eunice

My prudent father ! These men think that wisdom
Is tied up to their beards. We too have heads
And finer brains within them, as I think !

*She goes up on the dais ; Leosthenes,
Callicrates and others enter together.*

Thoas

Leosthenes from Parthia ! Speeds the war ?

Leosthenes

It waits a captain.

Thoas

It shall have today
A king of captains.

Leosthenes

I have seen the boy.
But there's a mystery ? Shall he be the king ?

Thoas

If Fate agrees with Nature.

Leosthenes

Neither can err
So utterly, I think ; for if they could,
Man's will would have a claim to unseat Fate,
Which cannot be.

*Cleopatra enters with Antiochus and
Timocles ; Cleone, Rodogune in attendance,
the latter richly robed.*

Philoctetes

See where she places him !

Thoas

'Tis on her right !

Phayllus

It is a woman's ruse.
Or must I at disadvantage play the game
With this strong piece against ?

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Cleopatra

The strong Antiochus has gone too early
Down the dim gorges to that silent world
Where we must one day follow him. A younger hand
Takes up his sceptre and controls his sword.
These are the Syrian twins, Nicanor's sons,
These are Antiochus and Timocles.
Why so long buried, why their right oppressed,
Why their precedence tyrannously concealed,
Forget. Forget old griefs, old hatreds ; let them rest
Inurned, nor from their night recover them.

Nicanor

We need not raise the curtains that conceal
Things long inurned, but lest by this one doubt
The dead past lay a dark and heavy hand
Upon our fairer future, let us swear
The Queen shall be obeyed as if she spoke
For Heaven. Betwixt the all-seeing gods and her
Confine all cause of quarrel.

Phayllus

Let the princes swear ;
For how can subjects jar if they agree ?

Cleopatra

O not with oaths compel the Syrian blood !
My sons, do you consent ?

Timocles

Your sovereign will must rule,
Mother, your children and our fraternal kindness

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Princess of Parthia ; sit upon this throne,
Phraates' daughter; thou art peace and love
And must today be crowned. Marvel not, Syrians;
For it is peace my envoys bear by now
Upon their saddles to Persepolis.

Thoas

This was a secret haste !

Leosthenes

Is it possible ?
We had our heel upon the Parthian's throat.

Cleopatra

Since Parthia swept through the Iranian East
Wrecking the mighty Macedonian's toil,
War sways for ever like a darkened sea
In turmoil 'twixt our realms. How many heart-strings
Have broken, what tears of anguish have been wept
And eyes sought eastward unreturning eyes !
Joy has been buried in the blood-drenched sands.
Vain blood, vain weeping! Earth was made so wide
That many might have majesty and joy
Upon one mother's equal breast. But we
Arresting others' portions lose our own.
Nations that conquer widest, perish first,
Sapped by the hate of an uneasy world.
Then they are wisest victors who in time
Knowing the limits of their prosperous fate
Avoid the violence of Heaven. Syrians,
After loud battles I have founded glorious peace.
That fair work I began as Syria's queen;
To seal it Syria's king must not refuse.

Antiochus

I do refuse it. There shall be no peace.

Cleopatra

My son !

Antiochus

Peace! Are the Parthians at our gate ?
Has not alarm besieged Ecbatana ?
When was it ever seen or heard till now
That victors sued for peace ? And this the reason,
A woman's reason, because many have bled
And more have wept. It is the tears, the blood
Prodigally spent that build a nation's greatness.
I here annul this peace, this woman's peace,
I will proclaim with noise of victories
Its revocation.

Phayllus

Now

Thoas

Thou speakest, King

Timocles

You are not crowned as yet, Antiochus.

Antiochus

Syria forbids it, Syria's destiny
Sends forth her lion voices from the halls
Where trumpets blare towards Persepolis,
Forbidding peace.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Cleopatra

We do not sue for peace,
My son, but give peace, taking provinces
And taking Rodogune.

Timocles

Who twenty times
Outweighs all hero's actions and exceeds
Earth's widest conquests.

Antiochus

For her and provinces !
O worse disgrace ! The sword has won us these.
We wrong the mighty dead who conquered. Provinces !
Whose soil are they that we must sue for them ?
The princess ! She's my prisoner, is she not ?
Must I entreat the baffled Parthian then
What I shall do with my own slave girl here
In Antioch, in my palace ? Queen of Syria,
This was ignobly-done.

Cleopatra

I know you do not love me; in your cold heart
Love finds no home; but still I am your mother.
You will respect me thus when you are king ?

Antiochus

I will respect you in your place, enshrined
In your apartments, governing your women,
Not Syria.

Cleopatra

Leave it. You will not think of peace ?

Antiochus

Yes, when our armies reach Persepolis.

Melitus

How desperate looks the Queen ! What comes of this ?

Nicanor

(who has been watching Eunice)

End this debate; let Syria know her king.

Cleopatra rises and stands silent for a moment.

Timocles

Mother !

Cleopatra

Behold your king !

Mentho

She has done it, gods !

There is an astonished silence.

Nicanor

Speak once more, daughter of high Ptolemy,
Remembering God. Speak, have we understood ?
Is Timocles our king ?

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Cleopatra

(with a mechanical and rigid gesture)

Behold your king !

*Nicanor makes a motion of assent
as to the accomplished fact.*

Nicanor

Let then the King ascend his throne.

Leosthenes

(half-rising)

Thoas !

Philoctetes

Speak, King Antiochus, God's chosen king
Who art, not Cleopatra's.

Thoas

Speak, Antiochus.

Antiochus

Why didst thou give to me alone the name
Of Syria's princes ? why upon thy right
Hast seated me ? or wherefore mad'st thou terms
For that near time when I should be the king,
Chaffering for my consent with arguments
Unneeded if the younger were preferred ?
Wilt thou invoke the gods to seal this lie ?

Cleopatra

Dost thou insult me thus before my world ?
Ascend the throne, my son.

Antiochus

Stay, Timocles.
Make not such haste, my brother, to supplant
Thy elder.

Timocles

My elder ?

He looks at Cleopatra.

Cleopatra

I have spoken the truth.

Mentho

Thou hast not; thou art delivered of a lie,
A monstrous lie.

Cleone

Silence, thou swarthy slave

Mentho

I'll not be silent. She offends the gods.
I am Mentho the Egyptian, she who saw
The royal children born. She lies to you,
O Syrians. Royal young Antiochus
Was first on earth.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Thoas

The truth breaks out at last.

Phayllus

This is a slave the surplus mud of Nile
Engendered. Shall we wrong the Queen by hearing her ?

Mentho

I was a noble Egyptian's wife in Memphis,
No slave, thou Syrian mongrel, and my word
May stand against a perjured queen's.

Eunice

(leaning forward)

Is't done ?

*Nicanor who has been hesitating, observes
her action and stands forward to speak.*

Nicanor

The royal blood of Egypt cannot lie.
Shall Syria's queen be questioned ? Shall common words
Of common men be weighed against the breath of kings ?
Let not wild strife arise, O princes, let it not.
Antiochus, renounce unfilial pride;
Wound not thy mother and thy motherland,
Son of Nicanor.

Thoas

Shall a lie prevail ?

Nicanor

(looking again at Eunice)

It was settled then among you ! Be it so.
My sword is bare. I stand for Syria's king.

Philoctetes

(in the midst of a general hesitation)

Egyptian Philoctetes takes thy challenge,
Nicanor.

Antiochus

Who is for me in Syria?

Thoas

I set my sword
Against Nicanor's..

Leosthenes

I am Leosthenes.
I draw my victor steel for King Antiochus.

Antiochus

Who else for me ?

Others

I ! I ! and I ! and I !

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Callicrates and others

We for King Timocles.

Leosthenes

Slay them, cut down
The party of the liars.

*There is a shouting and tumult with
drawing and movement of swords.*

Nicanor

Protect the King.
Let insolent revolt at once be quenched
And sink in its own blood.

Leosthenes

I slay all strife
With the usurper.

Thoas

Stay, stay, Leosthenes.

Antiochus

Forbear ! forbear, I say ! let all be still !
The great Seleucus' house shall not be made
A shambles. Not by vulgar riot, not
By fratricidal murder will I climb
Into my throne, but up the heroic steps
Of ordered battle. Brother Timocles,

That oft-kissed head is sacred from my sword.
Nicanor, thou hast thrown the challenge down ;
I lift it up.

Cleopatra

O, hear me, son Antiochus.

Antiochus

I have renounced thee for my mother.

Rodogune

Alas !

Cleopatra

O wretched woman !

*She hurries out followed by Rodogune,
Eunice and Cleone.*

Nicanor

Thou shalt not do this evil,
Though millions help thee.

*He goes out with Timocles, Phayllus,
Callicrates and others of his party.*

Philoctetes

Can we hold the house
And seize the city ? We are many here.

Thoas

Nicanor's troops hold Antioch.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Leosthenes

Not here, not here.
Out to the army on the marches ! There
Is Syria's throne, not here in Antioch.

Antiochus

Mentho,
Go with us. Gather swiftly all our strength,
Then out to Parthia !

Scene 2

A hall in the Palace.

Rodogune, Eunice.

Rodogune

God gave my heart and mind ; they are not hers
To force into this vile adultery.
I am a Parthian princess, of a race
Who choose one lord and cleave to him for ever
Through death, through fire, through swords, in hell, in
heaven.

Eunice

The Queen's too broken. It was Phayllus said it.
He has leaped into the saddle of affairs
And is already master. What can we hope for,
Left captive in such hands ? Not Syria's throne
Shall you ascend beside your chosen lord,
But as a slave the bed of Timocles.

Rodogune

If we remain ! But who remains to die ?
In Parthian deserts, in Antiochus' tents !
There we can smile at danger.

Eunice

Yes, oh, yes !

Deserts for us are safe, not Antioch. Come.

Antiochus and Philoctetes enter from without.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Antiochus

I sought for you, Eunice, Rodogune.
To saddle ! for our bridal pomp and torches
Are other than we looked for.

Phayllus enters from within with Theras.

Phayllus

Today, no later.
The Egyptian rebel ravishes our queen !
Help ! help !

Antiochus

Off, Syrian weasel !

*He flings off Phayllus and goes out with
Eunice, Rodogune, Philoctetes.*

Phayllus

Theras, pursue them !

*Theras hastens out ; Phayllus rushes to
the window.*

Antiochus escapes ! Oppose him, sentinels.
A thousand pieces for his head ! he's through.
O for a speedy arrow !

Timocles enters with Cleone.

Timocles

Who escapes ?

Phayllus

Thy brother, forcing with him Rodogune,
And with them fled Eunice.

Timocles

Rodogune !

Phayllus

By force he carried her.

Timocles

O no, she went
Smiling and glad. O thou unwise Phayllus,
Why dost thou stay with me, a man that's doomed ?
He will come back and mount his father's throne
And rule the nations. Why would'st thou be slain ?
All, all's for him and ever was. I have had
Light loves, light friends, but no one ever loved me
Whom I desired. So was it in our boyhood's days,
So it persists. He is preferred in heaven
And earth is his and his humanity.
Even my own mother is a Niobe
Because he has renounced her.

Phayllus

I understand,
Seeing this, the reason.

Timocles

Why should he always have the things I prize ?
What is his friendship but a selfish need
Of souls to unbosom himself to, who will share,

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Mirror and serve his greatness ? Yet it was he
The clear discerning Philoctetes chose;
Upon his shoulder leaned my royal uncle
Preferring him to admonish and to love;
On me he only smiled as one too light
For praise or censure. What's his kingliness
But a lust of grandiose slaughter, an ambition
Almost inhuman and a haughty mind
That lifts itself above the highest heads
As if his mortal body held a god
And all were mean to him ? Yet proudest men,
Thoas, Theramenes, Leosthenes,
Become unasked his servants. What's his love ?
A despot's sensual longing for a slave,
Carnal, imperial, harsh, without respect,
The hunger of the vital self, not raised,
Refined, uplifted to the yearning heart.
Yet Rodogune, my Rodogune to him
Has offered up her moonlit purity,
Her secret need of sweetness. O she has
Unveiled to him her sweet proud heart of love.
She would not look at me who worshipped her.
You too, Phayllus, go, Cleone, go
And serve him in his tents : the future's there,
Not on this brittle throne with which the gods
In idle sport have mocked me.

Phayllus

There must be a man
Somewhere within this !

Cleone

You shall not speak so to him.
Look round, King Timocles, and see how many

Prefer you to your brother. I am yours,
Phayllus works for you, princely Nicanor
Protects you, famed Callicrates supports.
Your mother only weeps in fear for you,
Not passion for your brother.

Timocles

Rodogune

Has left me.

Phayllus

We will have her back. Today
Began, today shall end this rash revolt.
Rise up, King Timocles, and be thyself,
Possess thy throne, recover Rodogune.

Timocles

I cannot live unless you bring her back.

Phayllus

That is already seen to. My couriers ride
Before them to Thrasyllus on the hills.
Their flight will founder there.

Timocles

O subtle, quick
And provident Phayllus ! Thou, thou, deviser,
Art the sole minister for me. Cleone,
The gods have made thee wholly beautiful
That thou might'st love me.

He goes out with Cleone.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Phayllus

Minister ! That's something,
Not all I work for.

(to Theras who enters)

Well ?

Theras

He has escaped.
Your throw this time was bungled, Chancellor.

Phayllus

I saw this rapid flight, but afterwards ?

Theras

The band of Syrian Phliaps kept the gates.
We shouted loud, but he more quick, more high,
Like some clear-voiced Tyrrhenian trumpet cried,
"Syrians, I am your king," and they at once,
"Hail, glorious King !" and followed at his word,
Gallopings, till on the Orient road they seemed
Like specks on a white ribbon.

Phayllus

Let them go.
There's yet Thrasyllus. Or if he returns,
Though gods should help, though victory march his friend,
I am here to meet him.

Scene 3

Under the Syrian hills.

Antiochus, his generals, soldiers; Eunice, Rodogune, Mentho.

Antiochus

What god has moved them from their passes sheer
Where they were safe from me ?

Thoas

They have had word,
No doubt, to take us living.

Leosthenes

On !

Thoas

They are
Three thousand, we six hundred armed men.
Shall we go forward ?

Leosthenes

Onward still, I say !

Antiochus

Yes, on ! I turn not back lest my proud Fate
Avert her eyes from me. A hundred guard
The princesses.

He goes, followed by Thoas, Leosthenes, Philoctetes.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Eunice

He'll break them like sea-spray;
They shall not stand before him.

Rodogune

You missioned angels, guard Antiochus.

As she speaks, the Eremite enters and regards her.

Eunice

He is through them, he is through them ! How they scatter
Before his sword ! My warrior !

Rodogune

Who is this man,
Eunice ? He is terrible to me.

Eremite

Who art thou rather, born to be a torch
To kingdoms ? Is not thy beauty, rightly seen,
More terrible to men than monstrous forms
Which only frighten ?

Eunice

What if kingdoms burn,
So they burn grandly ?

Eremite

Spirits like thine think so.
Princess of Antioch, hast thou left thy father
To follow younger eyes ? Alas, thou know'st not

Where they shall lead thee ! It is to gates accursed
And by a dolorous journey.

Eunice

Beyond all portals
I'd follow ! I am a woman of the Greeks
Who fear not death nor hell.

Antiochus returns.

Antiochus

Our swords have hewn
A road for us. Who is this flamen ?

Eremite

Hail !
"Rejoice" I cannot say, but greet Antiochus
Who never shall be king.

Antiochus

Who art thou, speak,
Who barr'st with such ill-omened words my way
Discouraging new-born victory ? What thou know'st,
Declare ! Curb not thy speech. I have a mind
Stronger than omens.

Eremite

I am the appointed voice
Who come to tell thee thou shalt not be king,
But at thy end shall yield to destiny

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

For all thy greatness, genius, pride and force
Even as the tree that falls. March then no farther,
For in thy path Fate hostile stands.

Antiochus

If Fate
Would have me yield, let her first break me. On !

Eremite

The guardians of the path then wait for thee
Vigilant lest the world's destiny be foiled
By human greatness. March on to thy doom.

Antiochus

I will. Straight on, whatever doom it be !

Eremite

Farewell, thou mighty Syrian, soul misled,
Strength born untimely ! we shall meet again
When death shall lead thee into Antioch.

He goes.

Antiochus

March.

ACT IV

The Palace in Antioch. Before the hills.

Scene 1

Cleopatra's chamber.

Cleopatra, Zoyla.

Cleopatra

Will he not come this morning ? How my head aches !
Zoyla, smooth the pain out of it, my girl,
With your deft fingers. Oh, he lingers, lingers !
Cleone keeps him still, the rosy harlot
Who rules him now. She is grown a queen and reigns
Insulting me in my own palace. Yes,
He's happy in her arms; why should he care for me
Who am only his mother ?

Zoyla

Is the pain less at all ?

Cleopatra

O, it goes deeper, deeper. Ever new revels,
While still the clang of fratricidal war
Treads nearer to his palace. Zoyla,
You saw him with Cleone in the groves
That night of revel ?

Zoyla

So, I told you, madam.
It is long since Daphne's groves have gleamed so bright
Or trembled to such music.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Cleopatra

They were together ?

Zoyla

Oh, constantly. One does not see such lovers.

Cleopatra

(shaking her off)

Go !

Zoyla

Madam ?

Cleopatra

Thy touch is not like Rodogune's
Nor did her gentle voice offend me. Eunice,

(Zoyla retires)

Why hast thou left me, cruel cold Eunice ?

She walks to the window and returns swiftly.

God's spaces frighten me. I am so lonely
In this great crowded palace.

Timocles enters the room, reading a despatch.

Timocles

He rushes onward like a god of war.
Mountains and streams and deserts waterless
Are grown our foes, his helpers. The gods give ground
Before his horsehooves.

Millions of men arrayed in complete steel
 Cannot restrain him. Almost we hear in Antioch
 His trumpets now. Only Nicanor and the hills
 Hardly protect my crown, my brittle crown !

Cleopatra

Antiochus comes !

Timocles

The Macedonian legions
 Linger somewhere upon the wide Aegean. Sea
 And land contend against my monarchy.
 Your brother sends no certain word.

Cleopatra

It will come.
 Could not the Armenian helpers stay his course ?
 They came like locusts.

Timocles

But are swept away
 As with a wind. O mother, fatal mother,
 Why did you keep me from the battle then ?
 My presence might have spurred men's courage on
 And turned this swallowing fate. It is alone
 Your fault if I lose crown and life.

Cleopatra

My son !

Timocles

There, mother, I have made you weep. I love you,
 Dear mother, though I make you often weep.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Cleopatra

I have not blamed you, my sweet Timocles,
I did the wrong. Go to the field, dear son,
And show yourself to Syria. Timocles,
I mean no hurt, but now, only just now,
Would not a worthier presence at your side
Assist you ? My royal brother of Macedon
Would give his child to you at my desire,
Or you might have your fair Egyptian cousin
Berenice. Syria would honour you, my son.

Timocles

I know your meaning. You are so jealous, mother.
Why do you hate Cleone, grudging me
The solace of her love ? I shall lose Syria
And I have lost already Rodogune :
Cleone clings to me. Nor is her heart
Like yours, selfish and jealous.

Cleopatra

Timocles !

Timocles

(walking to the window)

O Rodogune, where hast thou taken those eyes,
My moonlit midnight, where that wondrous hair
In which I thought to live as in a cloud
Of secret sweetness ? Under the Syrian stars
Somewhere thou liest in my brother's arms,
Thy pale sweet happy face upon his breast

Smiling up to be kissed. O, it is hell,
 The thought is hell ! At midnight in the silence
 I wake in warm Cleone's rosy clasp
 To think of thee embraced ; then in my blood
 A fratricidal horror works. Let it not be,
 You gods ! Let me die first, let him be king.
 O mother, do not let us quarrel any more :
 Forgive me and forget.

Cleopatra

You go from me ?

Timocles

My heart is heavy. I will drink awhile
 And hear sweet harmonies.

Cleopatra

There in the hall
 And with Cleone ?

Timocles

Let it not anger you.
 Yes, with Cleone.

He goes.

Cleopatra

I am alone, so terribly alone !

Scene 2

A hall in the Palace.

Phayllus, Theras.

Theras

His fortune holds.

Phayllus

He has won great victories
And stridden exultant like a god of death
Over Grecian, Syrian and Armenian slain ;
But being mortal at each step has lost
A little blood. His veins are empty now.
Where will he get new armies ? His small force
May beat Nicanor's large one, even reach Antioch,
To find the Macedonian there. They have landed.
He is ours, Theras, this great god of tempest,
Our captive whom he threatens, doomed to death
While he yet conquers.

*Timocles enters with Cleone, then the
musicians and dancing girls.*

Timocles

Bring in the wine and flowers ; sit down, sit down.
Call in the dancers. Through the Coan robes
Let their bright flashing limbs assault my eyes
Capturing the hours, imprisoning my heart
In a white whirl of movement. Sit, Cleone.
Here on my breast, against my shoulder ! You rose
Petalled and armed, you burden of white limbs

Made to be kissed and handled, you Cleone !
 Yes, let the world be flowers and flowers our crown
 With rosy linkings red as our own hearts
 Of passion. O wasp soft-settling, poignant, sting,
 Sting me with bliss until I die of it.

Phayllus

I do not like this violence. Theras, go.

Theras leaves the hall.

Timocles

Drink, brother Phayllus. Your webs will glitter more
 brightly,

You male Arachne.
 More wine ! I'll float my heart out in the wine
 And pour all on the ground to naked Eros
 As a libation. I will hide my heart
 In roses, I will smother thought with jonquils.
 Sing, someone to me ! sing of flowers, sing mere
 Delight to me far from this troubled world.

Song

Will you bring cold gems to crown me,
 Child of light ?
 Rather quick from breathing closes
 Bring me sunlight, myrtle, roses,
 Robe me in delight.
 Give me rapture for my dress,
 For its girdle happiness.

Timocles

Closer, Cleone ; pack honey into a kiss.
 Another song ! you dark-browed Syrian there !

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Song

Wilt thou snare Love with rosy brightness
To make him stay with thee ?
The petulant child of a fair, cruel mother,
He flees from me to crown another.
O misery !
Love cannot be snared, love cannot be shared ;
Light love ends wretchedly.

Timocles

Remove these wine-cups ! tear these roses down !
Who snared me with these bonds ? Take hence, thou harlot,
Thy rose-faced beauty ! Thou art not Rodogune.

Cleone

What is this meanness ?

Timocles

Hence ! leave me ! I am sick
Of thy gold and roses.

Phayllus

Go, women, from the room ;
The King is ill. Go, girl, leave him to me.

*All go, Cleone reluctantly, leaving Phayllus
with Timocles.*

Timocles

I will not bear it any more. Give me my love
Or let me die.

Phayllus

In a few nights from this
Thou shalt embrace her.

Timocles

Silence ! It was not I.
What have I said ? It was the wine that spoke.
Look not upon me with those eyes of thine.

Phayllus

The wine or some more deep insurgent spirit
Burns in thy blood. Thou shalt clasp Rodogune.

Timocles

Thy words, thy looks appal me. She's my brother's wife
Sacred to me.

Phayllus

His wife ? Who wedded them ?
For not in camps and deserts Syria's kings
Accomplish wedlock. She's his concubine.
Slave girl she is and bed-mate of thy brother
And may be thine. Or if she were his soul-close wife
Death rends all ties.

Timocles

I will not shed his blood.
Silence, thou tempter ! he is sacred to me.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Phayllus

Thou need'st not stain thy hands, King Timocles.
Be he live flesh or carrion, she is thine.

Timocles

Yet has she lain between my brother's arms.

Phayllus

What if she were thy sister, should that bar thee
From satisfaction of thy heart and body ?

Timocles

Do you not tremble when you say such things?

Phayllus

We have outgrown these thoughts of children, King :
Nor gods nor ghosts can frighten us. You shake
At phantoms of opinion or you feign
To start at such, forgetting what you are.
The royal house of Egypt heeds them not,
Where you are nursed. Your mother sprang from incest.
If in this life you lose your Rodogune,
Are others left where you may have her bliss ?
Your brother thought not so, but took her here.

Timocles

I'll not be tempted by thee.

Phayllus

No, by thyself
Be tempted and the thought of Rodogune.
Or shall we leave her to her present joys ?
Perhaps she sleeps yet by Antiochus
Or held by him to sweeter vigilance.

Timocles

(furiously)

Accursèd ruffian, give her to my arms.
Use fair means or use foul, use steel, use poison,
But free me from these inner torments.

Phayllus

From more
Than passion's injuries. Trust thy fate to me
Who am its guardian.

He goes out.

Timocles

I am afraid, afraid !
What furies out of hell have I aroused
Within, without me ? Let them do their will.
For I must have her once between my arms,
Though Heaven leap down in lightnings.

Scene 3

*Before the Syrian hills. Antiochus' tent.
Antiochus, Thoas, Leosthenes, Philoctetes.*

Philoctetes

This is Phayllus' work, the Syrian mongrel.
Who could have thought he'd raise against us Greece
And half this Asia ?

Antiochus

He has a brain.

Thoas

We feel it.

This fight's our latest and one desperate chance
Still smiles upon our fate.

Antiochus

Nicanor yields it us,
Scattering his armies; for if we can seize,
Before he gathers in his distant strengths,
This middle pass, Antioch comes with it. So
I find it best and think the gods do well
Who put before us one decisive choice,
Not lingering out their vote in balanced urns,
Not tediously delaying strenuous fate,—
Either to conquer with one lion leap
Or end in glorious battle.

Thoas

We ask no better;
With you to triumph or die beside you taking
The din of joyous battle in our ears,
Following your steps into whatever world.

Philoctetes

Have we not strength enough to enforce retreat
Like our forefathers through the Asian vasts
To Susa or the desert or the sea
Or Ptolemy in Egypt,—thence returning
With force of foreign levies, if Phayllus
Draw even the distant Roman over here,
Dispute with him the world ?

Antiochus

No, Philoctetes.
With native swords I sought my native crown,
Which if I win not upon Syria's hills
A hero's death is mine. Make battle ready.
Our bodies are the dice we throw again
On the gods' table.

Scene 4

The same.

Antiochus, Eunice, Rodogune.

Antiochus

I put my hand on Antioch. Thou hast done well,
O admirable quick Theramenes.
This fight was lionlike.

Eunice

And like the lion
Thou art, my warrior, thou canst now descend
Upon Seleucus' city. How new 'twill seem
After the mountains and the starlit skies
To sleep once more in Antioch !

Rodogune

I trust the stars
And mountains better. They were kind to me.
My blood within me chills when I look forward
And think of Antioch.

Antiochus

These are the shadows from a clouded past
Which shall not be repeated, Rodogune.
This is not Antioch that thou knew'st, the prison
Of thy captivity, thou enterest now,
Not Antioch of thy foes, but a new city
And thy own kingdom.

Rodogune

Are the gods so good ?

Antiochus

The gods are strong; they love to test our strength
Like armourers hammering steel. Therefore 'twas said
That they are jealous. No, but high and stern
Demanding greatness from the great; they strike
At every fault they see, perfect themselves
Labour at our perfection. What rumour increases
Approaching from the mountains ? Thoas, thou ?

Thoas enters.

Thy brow is dark. Is it Theramenes ?
Returns our fortune broken ?

Thoas

Broken and fallen.

We who are left bring back Theramenes
Upon whose body twenty glorious wounds
Smile at defeat.

Antiochus

Theramenes before me !
How have you kept me lying in my tents !
I thought our road was clear of foemen.

Thoas

The gods

Had other resources that we knew not of.
Within the passes, on the summit couch

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

The spears of Macedon. They have arrived
From the sea, from Antioch.

Antiochus

The Macedonians ! Then
Our day is ended ; we must think of night.
We reach our limit, Thoas.

Thoas

That's if we choose ;
For there are other tidings.

Antiochus

They should be welcome.

Thoas

Phraates, thy imperial father, comes
With myriad hosts behind him thunder-hooved,
Not for invasion armed as Syria's foe,
But for the husband of his Rodogune.
Shall we recoil upon these helpers ? Death
Can always wait.

Antiochus

Perhaps. Leave me awhile,
Thoas ; for we must sit alone tonight,
My soul and I together ; Rodogune,

Thoas goes.

Wouldst thou go back to Parthia, to thy country ?

Rodogune

I have no country, I have only thee.
I shall be where thou art ; it is all I know
And all I wish for.

Antiochus

Eunice, wilt thou go
To Antioch safe ? My mother loves thee well.

Eunice

I follow her and thee. What talk is this ?
I shall grow angry.

Antiochus

Am I other, Eunice,
Than once I was ? Is there a change in me
Since first I came into your lives from Egypt ?

Eunice

You are my god, my warrior and the same
You ever were.

Antiochus

To her and thee I am.
Sleep well, my Rodogune, for thou and I
Not sure of Fate, are of each other sure.
To thee what else can matter ?

Rodogune

Nothing else.

*Rodogune and Eunice enter the interior
of the tent.*

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Antiochus

A god ! Yes, I have godlike stirrings in me,
Shall they be bounded by this petty world ?
The sea can span ? If Rome, Greece, Africa,
Asia and all the undiscovered globe
Were given me for my garden, all glory mine,
All men my friends, all women's hearts my own,
Would there not still be bounds, still continents
Unvanquished ? O thou glorious Macedonian,
Thou too must seek at last more worlds to conquer.
Hast thou discovered them ?
This earth is but a hillock when all's said,
The sea an azure puddle. All tonight
Seems strange to me ; my wars, ambition, fate
And what I am and what I might have been,
Float round me vaguely and withdraw from me
Like grandiose phantoms in a mist. Who am I ?
Whence come I ? Whither go, or wherefore now ?
Who gave me these gigantic appetites
That make a banquet of the world ? Who set
These narrow, scornful and exiguous bounds
To my achievement ? O, to die, to pass,
Nothing achieved but this, "He tried great things,
Accomplished small ones." If this life alone
Be given us to fail or to succeed,
Then 'tis worth keeping.

The Parthian treads our land!

Phraates' hooves dig Grecian soil once more !
The subtle Parthian ! He has smiled and waited
Till we were weak with mutual wounds and now
Stretches his foot towards Syria. Have I then
Achieved this only, my country's servitude ?
Shall that be said of me ? It galls, it stabs.
My fame ! "Destroyer of Syria, he ended

The great Seleucus' work." Whatever else
 O'ertake me, in this the strong gods shall not win.
 I will give up my body and sword to Timocles,
 Repel the Parthian, save from this new death,
 These dangerous allies from Macedon,
 Syria, then die.
 But wherefore die ? Should I not rather go
 With my sole sword into the changeful world,
 Create an empire, not inherit one ?
 Are there not other realms ? has not the East
 Great spaces ? In huge torrid Africa
 Beyond the mystic sources of the Nile
 There must be empires. Or if with a ship
 One sailed for ever through the infinite West,
 Through Ocean and still Ocean for three years,
 Might not one find the old Atlantic realms
 No fable ? Thy narrow lovely litoral,
 O blue Mediterranean, India, Parthia,
 Is this the world ? I thirst for mightier things
 Than earth has. But for what I dreamed, to bound
 Upon Nicanor through the deep-bellied passes
 Or fall upon the Macedonian spears,
 It were glorious, yet a glorious cowardice,
 Too like self-slaughter. Is it not more heroic
 To battle with than to accept calamity ?
 Unless indeed all thinking-out is vain
 And Fate our only mover. Seek it out, my soul,
 And make no error here; for on this hour
 The future of the man Antiochus,
 What future he may have upon the earth
 In name or body lies. Reveal it to me, Zeus !
 In Antioch or upon the Grecian spears,
 Where lies my fate ?

While he is speaking, the Erémite enters.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Eremite

Before thee always.

Antiochus

How
Cam'st thou or whence ? I know thy ominous look.

Eremite

The how inquire not nor the whence, but learn
The end is near which I then promised thee.

Antiochus

So then, defeat and death were from the first
My portion ! Wherefore were thoughts gigantical
With which I came into my mother ready-shaped
If they must end in the inglorious tomb ?

Eremite

Despise not proud defeat, scorn not high death.
The gods accept them sternly.

Antiochus

Yes, as I shall,
But not submissively.

Eremite

Break then, thou hill
Unsatisfied with thy own height. The gods
Care not if thou resist or if thou yield;

They do their work with mortals. To the Vast
 Whence thou, O ravening, strong and hungry lion,
 Overleaping cam'st the iron bars of Time,
 Return ! Thou hast thy tamers. God of battles !
 Son of Nicanor ! Strong Antiochus !
 Depart and be as if thou wert not born.
 The gods await thee in Antioch.

He departs.

Antiochus

I will meet them there.
 Break me. I see you can, O gods. But you break
 A body, not this soul; for that belongs, I feel,
 To other masters. It is settled then.
 Tomorrow sets in Antioch.

Scene 5

The Same.

Philoctetes, Thoas, Leosthenes, Eunice.

Leosthenes

Surely this is the change that comes on men
Who are to die.

Philoctetes

O me, it is, it is.

Thoas

Princess Eunice, what think you of it ?

Eunice

Thoas, what matters what we think ? We follow
Our king; it is his to choose our paths for us.
Lead they to death ? Then we can die with him.

Thoas

That's nobly spoken.

Philoctetes

But too like a woman.

Antiochus enters with Rodogune.

Antiochus

To Antioch ! Is all ready for our march ?

Philoctetes

Antiochus, my king, I think in Egypt
We loved each other.

Antiochus

Less here, my Philoctetes ?

Philoctetes

Then by that love, dear friend, go not to Antioch.
Let us await the Parthian in his march.
What do you seek at Antioch ? A mother angry ?
A jealous brother at whose ear a fatal knave
Sits always whispering ? lords inimical ?
What can you hope from these ? Go not to Antioch.
I see Death smiling, waving you to go,
But do not.

Antiochus

Dearest comrade Philoctetes,
Fate calls to me and shall I shrink from her ?
I know my little brother Timocles,
I feel his clasp already, see his smile.
But there's Phayllus ! Shall I fall so low
As to fear him ? Forgive me, friend ; I go to Antioch.

Philoctetes

It was decreed !

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Antiochus

But you, my friends, who have no love
To shield you and perhaps great enemies,
Will you fall back until I make your peace
To Egypt or Phraates ?

Thoas

Not a man
Will leave your side who followed your victorious sword.
We follow always.

Antiochus

Beat then the drums and march.
But let an envoy ride in front to Timocles
And tell him that Antiochus comes to lay
His victor sword between a brother's knees
And fight for him with Parthia. Let us march.

All go except Philoctetes.

Philoctetes

(looking after him)

O sun, thou goest rushing to the night
Which shall engulf thee.

ACT V

The Palace in Antioch.

Scene 1

A hall in the Palace.

Phayllus, alone.

Phayllus

My brain has loosened harder knots than this.
Timocles gets by this his Rodogune;
That's one thing gained. Tonight or else tomorrow
I'll have her in his bed though I have to hale her
Stumbling to it through her own husband's blood.
For he must die. He is too great a man
To be a subject : nor is that his intention
Who hides some subtler purpose. Exile would free him
For more stupendous mischief. Death ! But how ?
There is this Syrian people, there is Timocles
Whose light unstable mind like a pale leaf
Trembles, desires, resolves, renounces.

Timocles enters.

Timocles

Phayllus,

It is the high gods bring about this good.
My great high brother, strong Antiochus
To come and kneel to me ! No hatred more !
He is the brother whom I loved in Egypt.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Phayllus

Oh, wilt thou always be, thou shapeless soul,
Clay for each passing circumstance to alter ?

Timocles

Do you not think I have only now to ask
And he will give me Rodogune ? She's not his wife !
Cast always together in the lonely desert,
Long nearness must have wearied him of her ;
For he was never a lover ; O Phayllus,
When so much has been brought about, will you tell me
This will not happen too ? I am sure the gods
Intend this.

Phayllus

So you think Antiochus comes
To lay his lofty head below your foot ?
You can believe it ! Truly, if you think that,
There's nothing left that cannot be believed.
This soul that dreamed of conquests at its birth,
This strong overweening swift ambitious man
Whom victory disappoints, to whom continents
Seem narrow, will submit, you say,—to you ?
You'll keep him for your servant ?

Timocles

What is it you hint ?
Stroke not your chin ! Speak plainly. Do you know,
I sometimes hate you !

Phayllus

I care not, if you hear me
And let me guard you from your enemies.

Timocles

I know you love me but your thoughts are evil
To every other and your ways are worse.
Yet speak; what is it you fear ?

Phayllus

How should I know ?

Yet this seems probable that having failed
By violent battle he is creeping in
To slay you silently. You smile at that ?
It is the commonest rule of statesmanship
And History's strewn with instances. Believe it not;
Believe your wishes, not mankind's record;
Slumber till with the sword in you you wake
And he assumes your purple.

Timocles

(indifferently)

I hear, Phayllus. Let him give me Rodogune
And all's excused he has ever done to me.

Phayllus

He will keep her and take all hearts besides
That ever loved you.

Timocles

(still indifferently)

I will see that first.

Cleopatra enters quickly.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Cleopatra

It is true, Timocles ? It is even true ?
Antiochus my son is coming to me,
Is coming to me !

Timocles

Thus you love him still !

Cleopatra

He is my child, he has his father's face.
And I shall have my Parthian Rodogune
With her sweet voice and gentle touch, and her,
My darling, my clear-eyed delight, Eunice,
And I shall not be lonely any more.
I have not been so happy since you came
From Egypt. But, O heaven ! what followed that ?
Will now no stark calamity arise
With Gorgon head to turn us into stone
Venging this glimpse of joy ? Torn by your scourges
I fear you, gods, too much to trust your smile.

Nicanor enters.

Nicanor

Antiochus comes.

Timocles

Hail, thou victorious captain,
Syria's strong rescuer !

Nicanor

Syria's rescuer comes,
Thy brother Antiochus who makes himself
A sword to smite thy dangerous enemies.

Phayllus

You used not once to praise him so, Nicanor.

Nicanor

Because I knew not then his nobleness
Who had only seen his might.

Phayllus

Yet had you promised
That if he entered Antioch, it would be chained
And naked, travelling to the pit or sword,
Nicanor.

Nicanor

He comes not as a prisoner,
But royally disdaining to enslave
For private ends his country to the Parthian.

Timocles

Comes my dear brother soon ?

Nicanor

Even at this moment

He enters.

Timocles

Summon our court. Let all men's eyes behold
This reconciliation. I shall see
Next moment Rodogune !

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

*There enter from one side Callicrates, Melitus,
Cleone, courtiers ; from the other Antiochus,
Eunice, Rodogune, Thoas, Leosthenes, Philoctetes.*

Timocles

O brother, in my arms ! Let this firm clasp
Be sign of the recovered amity
That binds once more for joy Nicanor's sons.

Antiochus

This is like thee, my brother Timocles.
Let all vain strife be banished from our souls.
My sword is thine, and I am thine and all
I have and love is thine, O Syrian Timocles,
Devoted to thy throne for Syria.

Timocles

All ?

Brother ! O clasp me once again, Antiochus.

Antiochus

The Syrian land once cleansed of perils, rescued
From these fierce perils, I shall have thy leave,
Brother, to voyage into distant lands ;
But not till I have seen your Antioch joys
Of which they told us, I and my dear wife,
The Parthian princess Rodogune. See, brother,
How all things work out by a higher will.
Thou hast the Syrian kingdom, I have her
And my own soul for monarchy.

Timocles

His wife !

Melitus

The King is pale and gnaws his nether lip.

Antiochus

Mother, I kneel to you ; raise me this time
And I will not be froward.

Cleopatra

My child ! my child !

Timocles

He will not give me Rodogune ! And now he'll steal
My mother's heart. Captains, I welcome you :
You are my soldiers now.

Leosthenes

We thank thee, King.
We are thy brother's soldiers, therefore thine.

Timocles

Yes ! Philoctetes, old Egyptian friend,
You go not yet to Egypt ?

Philoctetes

I know not where.
I have forgotten why I came from thence.
I hope that you will love your brother.

Timocles

Him !

Oh yes, I'll love him.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Antiochus

Brother Timocles,
We have come far today ; will you appoint us
Our chamber here ?

Timocles

I'll take you to them, brother.

All leave the hall except Cleone and Phayllus.

Cleone

Is this their peace ? But he'll have Rodogune
And I shall like a common flower be thrown
Into the dust-heap.

Phayllus

Pooh !

Cleone

I have eyes, I see.
Even then I knew I would be nothing to you
Once you were seated. I'll not be flung away !
Beware, Phayllus ; for Antiochus lives.

Phayllus

Make change of lovers then with Rodogune
While yet he lives.

Cleone

I might even do that.
He has a beautiful body like a god's.
I will not have him slain.

Phayllus

You may be his widow
If you make haste in marrying him ; for soon
He will be carrion.

Timocles returns.

Timocles

I'd have a word with you,
Phayllus.

Cleone withdraws out of hearing.

Where will they put the Parthian Rodogune ?

Phayllus

Put her ?

Timocles

To sleep, dull ruffian ! Her chamber ! Where ?

Phayllus

Why, in one bed with Prince Antiochus.

Timocles

Thou bitter traitor, dar'st thou say it too ?
Art thou too leagued to slay me ? Shall I bear it ?
In my own palace ! In one bed ! O God !
I will go now and stab him through the heart
And drag her, drag her—

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Cleone

(running to him)

The foam is on his lips !

Phayllus

Restrain thy passions, King ! He is transformed.
This is that curious devil, jealousy.
As if it mattered ! He will have her soon.

Timocles

Cleone, I thank you. When I think of this,
Something revolts within to strangle me
And tears my life out of my bosom. Phayllus,
You spoke of plots ; where are they ? Let me see them.

Phayllus

That's hard. Are they not hidden in his breast ?

Timocles

Can you not tear them out ?

Phayllus

Torture your brother !

Timocles

Torture his generals ; let them howl their love for him !
Torture Eunice. Let truth come out twixt shrieks !
Number her words with gouts of blood !

Phayllus

You'll hurt yourself.
Be calmer. Torture ! To what purpose that ?
It is not profitable.

Timocles

I will have proofs.
Wilt thou thwart me, thou traitor, even thou ?
Arrange his trial instantly, arrange
His exile.

Phayllus

Exile ! You might as well arrange
At once your ruin.

Timocles

There shall be justice, justice.
Thou shalt be fairly judged, Antiochus.
I will not slay him. Exile ! And Rodogune
With me in Antioch.

Phayllus

Listen ! the passing people sing his name.
They'll rise to rescue him and slay us all
As dogs are killed in summer. Command his death
No man will rise for a dead carcase. Death,
Not exile ! He'll return with Ptolemy
Or great Phraates, take your Syria from you,
Take Rodogune.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Timocles

I give my power to you.
Try him and sentence him. But execution,
Let it be execution. I will have
No murder done. Arrange it.

He goes out followed by Cleone.

Phayllus

While he's in the mood,
It must be quickly done. But that's to venture
With no support in Syria when it's done
Except this brittle king. It matters not.
Fortune will bear me out ; she's grown my slave girl.
What liberties have I not taken with her
Which she has suffered amorously, kinder grown
After each handling. Watch me, my only lover !
Sudden and swift shall be Phayllus' stroke.

Scene 2

Antiochus' chamber.

Cleopatra, Antiochus, Eunice, Rodogune.

Cleopatra

Eunice, cruel, heartless, sweet Eunice,
How could you leave me ?

Eunice

Pardon me, dear lady.

Antiochus

Mine was the error, mother.

Cleopatra

O my son,
If you had said that "mother" to me then,
All this had never happened.

Antiochus

I have been hard
To you my mother, you to me your son.
We have both erred and it may be the gods
Will punish our offences even yet.

Cleopatra

O, say not that, my child. We must be happy ;
I will have just a little happiness.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Rodogune

O, answer her with kisses, dear Antiochus.

Cleopatra

Do you too plead for me, sweet Parthian ?

Eunice

Cousin

Antiochus.

Antiochus

My heart is chastened and I love,
Mother, though even now I will not lie
And say I love you as a child might love
Who from his infancy had felt your clasp.
But, mother, give me time and if the gods
Will give it too, who knows ? we may be happy.

Philoctetes enters.

Philoctetes

Pardon me, Madam, but my soul is harried
With fierce anxieties. You do not well
To linger with your son Antiochus.
A jealous anger works in Timocles
When he hears of it.

Cleopatra

Is't possible ?

Philoctetes

Fear it !

Believe it !

Cleopatra

(shuddering)

I will not give the gods a handle.
But I may take Eunice and your wife
To comfort me a little ?

Antiochus

Go with her,
Eunice. Leave me for an hour, my Rodogune.

All go from the chamber except Antiochus.

When, when will the gods strike ? I feel the steps
Of Doom about me. Open thy barriers, Death ;
I would not linger underneath the stroke.

Phayllus enters with soldiers.

Phayllus

Seize him ! This is the prince Antiochus.

Antiochus

So soon ! I said not farewell to my love.
Well, Syrian, dost thou carry only warrants
Or keeps the death-doom pace with thy arrest ?

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Phayllus

Thy plots have been discovered, plotter.

Antiochus

Plots !

Vain subtle fool, I will not answer thee.

What matters the poor pretext ? Guards, conduct me.

He goes out guarded.

Phayllus

Must thou be royal even in thy fall ?

Scene 3

The same.

Eunice, Rodogune.

Rodogune

Will they not let me go and see him even ?

Eunice

We'll make our way to him and out for him
To Egypt, Egypt.

Rodogune

There's only one joy left:
To be with him whether we live or die.

Eunice

You are too meek. Cleone helps us here
Whatever be the spring of her strange pity.
When we come back, Phayllus, we shall find out
Whether the ingenuity of men
Holds tortures huge enough for your deserts.

Rodogune

Why do you pace about with flaming eyes ?
Be still and sit and put your hand in mine.

Eunice

My Parthian sweetness ! O, the gods are cruel
Who torture such a heart as thine.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Rodogune

Where is

My mother ?

Eunice

She is lying in her room
Dry-eyed and voiceless, gazing upon Fate
With eyes I dare not look at. Till tomorrow.
At dawn we'll have him out. Cleone bribes
The sentries ; Thoas has horses and a ship
Wide-winged for Egypt, Egypt.

Rodogune

O yes, let us leave

Syria and cruel Antioch.

Eunice

For a while.

I would have had him out tonight, my king,
But ruffian Theras keeps the watch till dawn.
How long will walls immure so huge a prisoner ?
Trial ! When he returns in arms from Egypt,
Try him, Phayllus. We must wait till dawn.

Rodogune

I shall behold him once again at dawn.

Scene 4

A guard-room in the palace.

Antiochus, alone.

Antiochus

What were Death then but wider life than earth
Can give us in her clayey limits bound ?
Darkness perhaps ! There must be light behind.

As he speaks, Phayllus enters.

Who is it ?

Phayllus

Phayllus and thy conqueror.

Antiochus

In some strange warfare then !

Phayllus

I came to see
Before thy end the greatness that thou wert;
For thou wert great as mortals measure. Thou hast
An hour to live.

Antiochus

Shorter were better.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Phayllus

An hour !

It is strange. The beautiful strong Antiochus
In one brief hour and by a little stroke
Shall be mere rotten carrion for the flies
To buzz about.

Antiochus

Thinkest thou so, Phayllus ?

Phayllus

I know it, and in thy fall, because thou wert great,
I feel my greatness who am thy o'erthrower.
I long to probe the mightiness thou art
And know the thoughts that fill thee at this hour,
For it must come to me some day. The things
We are, do and are done to ! Let it be.
Dost thou not ask to kiss thy wife ? She'd come,
Though she must leave thy brother's bed for it.

Antiochus

What a poor lie, Phayllus, for the great man
Thou think'st thyself !

Phayllus

Thou know'st not then for her
Thou diest, that his hungry arms may clasp
Her warm sweet body thou hast loved to kiss ?

Antiochus

So didst thou work it ? Thou art a rare study,
Thou Graeco-Syrian.

Phayllus

I am what my clay
Has made me. It does not hurt thee then to know
That while thou art dying, they are hard at work
Even now before thy kingly corpse is cold?

Antiochus

What a blind owl thou art that see'st the sun
And think'st it darkness ! Hence ! I weary of thee.
Thou art too shallow after all. Outside
Is it the dawn ?

Phayllus

The dawn. Thou wak'st too early
For one who shall not sleep again.

Antiochus

Yes, sleep
I have done with; now for an immortal waking.

Phayllus

That dream of fools ! Thou art another man
Than any I have seen and to my eyes
Thou seem'st a grandiose lack-wit. Yet in defeat
I could not move thee. I have limits then ?

Antiochus

Yes, didst thou think thyself a god in evil
And souls of men thy subjects ? Leave me, send
Thy executioner. Let him be quick.
I wait !

Phayllus goes.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

I fear he still will loiter. Waiting
Was ever tedious to me : I will sleep.

(He lies down ; after a pause)

Is this that other country ? Theramenes
Before me smiling with his twenty wounds
And Mentho with the breasts that suckled me !
Who are these crowding after me so fast ?
My mother follows me and cousin Eunice
Treads in her footsteps. Thou too, Timocles ?
Thoas, Leosthenes and Philoctetes,
Good friends, will you stay long ? The world grows empty.
Why, all that's great in Syria staggers after me
Into blind Hades ; I am royally
Attended.

Theras enters.

Theras

Phayllus' will compels me to it,
Or else I do not like the thing I do.

Antiochus

Who is it ? Thou art the instrument. Strike in.
Keep me not waiting. I ever loved proud swiftness
And thorough spirits.

Theras

I must strike suddenly or never strike.

He strikes.

Antiochus

I pass the barrier.

Theras

Will not this blood stop flowing?

Antiochus

The blood ? Let the gods have it; 't is their portion.

Theras

A red libation, O thou royal sacrifice !
I have done evil. Will sly Phayllus help me ?
He was a trickster ever. I have done evil.

Antiochus

Tell Parthian Rodogune I wait for her
Behind Death's barrier.

Theras

The world's too still. Will he not speak again
Upon this other side of nothingness ?
O sounds, sounds, sounds ! The sentries change, I think.
I'll draw thy curtains, O thou mighty sleeper.

*He draws the curtains, extinguishes the
light and goes out. All is still for a while,
then the door opens again and Eunice and
Rodogune enter.*

Eunice

Tread lightly, for he sleeps. The curtain's drawn.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Rodogune

O my Antiochus, on thy hard bed
In the rude camp with horses neighing round
Thou well mightst slumber nor the undistant trumpet
Startling unseal thy war-accustomed ears
From the sweet lethargy of earned repose.
But in the horrible silence of this prison
How canst thou sleep ? It clamours in my brain
More than could any sound, with terror laden
And voices.

Eunice

I'll wake him.

Rodogune

Do not. He is tired
And you will spoil his rest.

Eunice

He moves no more
Than the dead might.

Rodogune

Speak not of death, Eunice;
We are too near to death to speak of him.

Eunice

He must be waked. Cousin Antiochus,
You sleep too soundly for a prisoner. Wake !

Rodogune

There is some awful presence in this room.

Eunice

I partly feel it. Wake, wake, Antiochus.

She draws apart the curtain and puts in her arm, then hastily withdraws it.

O God, what is this dabbles so my hand,
That feels almost like blood ?

(tearing down the curtain)

Antiochus !

She falls half-swooned against the wall. There is a silence, then noise is heard in the corridors and the voice of Nicanor at the door.

Nicanor

Guard carefully the doors; let no evasion
Deceive you.

Rodogune

Antiochus ! Antiochus !

Antiochus !

Eunice

Call him not; he will wake
And Heaven be angry. O my Rodogune,
Let us too sleep.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Rodogune

Antiochus ! Antiochus !

Nicanor enters armed with soldiers' and light.

Nicanor

Am I in time ? Thou, thou ? How cam'st thou here ?
Who is this woman with the dreadful face ?
Can this be Rodogune ? Eunice, speak.
What is this blood upon thy hands and dress ?
Thou dost not speak ! Oh, speak !

Eunice

I am going, I am going to my chamber
To sleep.

Nicanor

Arrest her, guards.

He approaches the bed and recoils.

Awake the house !

Sound the alarm ! O palace of Nicanor,
Thou canst stand yet upon thy stony base
Untroubled ! The warlike prince Antiochus
Lies on this bed most treacherously murdered.

Cries and commotion outside.

Speak, wretched girl. What villain's secret hand
Profaned with death this royal sanctuary ?
How cam'st thou here or hast this blood on thee ?

*There enter in haste Callicrates,
Melitus, Cleone ; afterwards Phayllus
and others.*

Cleone

(To Nicanor)

Thou couldst not save him then for all my warning ?
In vain didst thou mistrust me !

Phayllus

(entering)

It is done. Yet Theras came not ! Do I fail !
Fortune, my kindly goddess, help me still
In the storm I have yet to weather.

Nicanor

Thou hast come !
This is thy work, thou ominous counsellor.

Phayllus

In all the land who dare impugn me, if it be ?

Nicanor

Thou art a villain. Thou shalt die for this.

Phayllus

One day I shall, for this or something else.
But here's the King.

Nicanor

No more a king for me
Or Syria.

Timocles enters followed by Cleopatra.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Melitus

The Queen comes cold and white and shuddering.

Cleopatra

(speaking with an unnatural calmness)

Why do these cries of terror shake the house
Repeating *Murder* and *Antiochus* ?
Nicanor, lives my son ?

Nicanor

Behold, O woman,
The frame you fashioned for Antiochus,
Cast from your love before, now cast from life,
By whose unnatural contrivance, let them say
Who did it.

Cleopatra

It is not true, it is not true !
There can be no such horror ; O, for this,
For this you gave him back !

Timocles

O gods ! Phayllus,
I did not think that he would look like this.

Melitus

Cover this death. It troubles the good King.

Timocles

(recovering himself)

This is a piteous sight, beloved mother ;
Would that he lived and wore the Syrian crown
Unquestioned.

Cleopatra

Timocles ? I will not credit
What yet a horror in my blood believes.
The eyes of all men charge you with this act ;
Deny it !

Timocles

Mother !

Cleopatra

Deny it !

Timocles

Alas, mother !

Cleopatra

Deny it !

Timocles

O mother, what shall I deny ?
It had to be. Blame only the dire gods
And bronze Necessity.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Cleopatra

Call me not mother !
I have no children. I am punished, gods,
Who dared outlive my great unhappy husband
For this !

She rushes out.

Nicanor

Is this thy end, O great Seleucus ?
What Fury rules thy house ? The Queen is gone
With desperate eyes. Who next ?

*There enter in haste Philoctetes, Thoas,
Leosthenes and others of Antiochus' party.*

Philoctetes

It is true then,
It is most true ! O high Antiochus,
How are thy royal vast imaginations
All spilt into a meagre stream of blood !
And yet thy eyes seem to gaze royally
Into death's vaster realms as if they viewed
More conquests there and mightier monarchies.
When we were boys and slumber came with noon,
Often you'd lay your head upon my knee
Even thus. O little friend Antiochus,
We are again in hundred-gated Thebes
And life is all before us.

Thoas

O insupportable !
Thou styled by men a king, no king of mine,
Acquit thyself of this too kindred blood.

No murderer sits in great Seleucus' chair
Longer than takes the movement of my sword
Out of its scabbard. I live to ask this question.

Leosthenes

Nor think thy royal title nor thy guards
Shall fence thy life, thou crownèd fratricide,
Nor many ranks of triple-plated iron
Shut out swift vengeance.

Philoctetes

His eyes look up and seem to smile at me.

Nicanor

Thoas, thy anger ranges far too wide.
Respect the blood of kings, Leosthenes.

Thoas

See dabbled on this couch the blood of kings
Thus by a kindred blood respected.

Timocles

The hearts

Of kings are not their own, nor yet their acts.
This was an execution, not a murder.
In better time and place you shall have proofs :
Phayllus knows it all. Be satisfied.
Lift up this royal dead. All hatred now
Forgotten, I will royally inter
His ashes guarding still his diadem
And sword and armour. All that most he loved
Shall go with him into the silent world.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Rodogune

I come.

Timocles

The voice of Rodogune ! That woman's form
The shadowy anguished robe concealed ! She here
Beside my brother !

Nicanor

We had forgotten how piteous was this scene.
O you who loved the dead, forbear a while ;
All shall be sternly judged.

Timocles

O Rodogune,
The dead demands thy grief, since he too loved thee,
But not in this red chamber pay thy debt,
Not in this square of horror. In thy calm room
Gently bedew his memory with tears
And I will help them with my own. Me too
He loved once.

Leosthenes

Shall our swords yet sleep ? He woos
His brother's wife beside his brother's corpse
Whom he has murdered.

Thoas

Yet, Leosthenes.
For Heaven has borne enough from him. At last
The gods lift up their secret thunderbolts
Above us.

Nicanor

She totters and can hardly move.
Assist her or she falls.

Philoctetes

(raising his head)

O Rodogune,
What wilt thou with my dead ?

Phayllus

Shall it be allowed ?

Timocles

I do not grudge this corpse her sad farewell.
O Rodogune, embrace the unresponsive dead ;
But afterwards remember life and love
Are still on earth.

Thoas

Afterwards, Timocles.
Give death a moment.

*There is a silence while Rodogune bends
swaying over the dead Antiochus.*

Timocles

O my Rodogune,
Leave now the dead man's side whose debt is paid.
Return to life, to love.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Rodogune

(stretching out her arms)

My king ! my king !
Leave me not, leave me not ! I am behind thee.

She falls dead at the feet of Antiochus.

Eunice

O take me also !

*She rushes to Rodogune and throws herself
on the dead bodies.*

Nicanor

Raise the princess up ;
She has swooned.

Thoas

Her heart has failed her : she is dead.

Timocles

Rise up, my Rodogune.

Thoas

She is dead, Timocles ;
She is safe from thee. Thou goest not alone,
My King, into the darkness.

Cleone

Look to the King !

Timocles

(speaking with difficulty)

Lives she ?

Melitus

No, she is dead, King Timocles.

Cleone

Brother, the King !

Timocles has been tearing at the robe round his neck. Phayllus, Melitus and others crowd round to support him as he falls.

Nicanor

It is a fit at worst
Which anger and despair have forced him to.

Phayllus

It is not death ? I live then.

Nicanor

Death, thou intriguer !
Art thou not Death who with thy wicked promptings
And poisonous whispers worked to dangerous rage
The kindly moods of Timocles ? Seize him,
He shall atone this murder.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Phayllus

You build too soon
Your throne upon these prostrate bodies. Your King
Lives still, Nicanor.

Nicanor

Not to save thee from death,
Nor any murderer. Drag him hence.

Cleone

The King revives.
Save thyself, brother.

Leosthenes

Ten kings should not avail
To save him.

Nicanor

Drag hence that subtle Satan.

Timocles

I live
And I remember !

Cleone

Sleepest thou, Phayllus ?

Phayllus

My King, they drag me hence to murder me.

Timocles

(vaguely at first)

Who art thou ? Thou abhorred and crooked devil,
Thou art the cause that she is lost to me.
Slay him ! And that shrewd-lipped, rose-tainted harlot,
Let her be banished somewhere from men's sight
Where she can be forgotten. O brother, brother,
I have sent thee into the darkling shades,
Myself am barred the way.

Phayllus

What I have done,
I did for this poor king and thankless man.
But there's no use in talking. I am ready.

Timocles

(half-rising, furiously)

Slay him with tortures ! Let him feel his death
As he has made me feel my living.

Nicanor

Take him
And see this sentence ruthlessly performed
Upon this frame of evil. May the gods
In their just wrath with this be satisfied.

Phayllus

And yet I loved thee, Timocles.

He is taken out, guarded.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Nicanor

Daughter,
Eunice, rise.

Eunice

I did not know till now
Life was so difficult a thing to leave.
Her going was so easy !

Nicanor

Ah, girl, this tragic drama owns in part
Thy authorship ! Henceforth be wise and humble.
To her chamber lead her.

Eunice

Do with me what you will.
My heart has gone to journey with my dead.
O father, for a few days bear with me ;
I do not think that I shall long displease you
Hereafter.

She goes, attended by Melius.

Nicanor

Follow her, Callicrates,
And let no dangerous edge or lethal drink
Be near to her despair.

Callicrates follows.

Thoas

This cannot keep us
From those we loved.

Nicanor

Syrians, what yet remains
Of this storm-visited, bolt-shattered house
Let us rebuild, joining our strengths to save
The threatened kingdom. For when this deed is known,
The Parthian lion leaps raging for blood
And Ptolemy's dangerous grief for the boy he cherished
Darkens on us from Egypt. Syria beset
And we all broken !

Timocles

Something has snapped in me
Physicians cannot bind. Thou, Prince Nicanor,
Art from the royal blood of Syria sprung
And in thy line Seleucus may descend
Untainted from his source. Brother, brother,
We did not dream that all would end like this,
When in the dawn or set we roamed at will
Playing together in Egyptian gardens,
Or in the orchards of great Ptolemy
Walked with our arms around each other's necks
Twin-hearted. But now unto eternity
We are divided. I must live for ever
Unfriended, solitary in the shades;
But thou and she will lie at ease inarmed
Deep in the quiet happy asphodel
And hear the murmur of Elysian winds
While I walk lonely.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Philoctetes

We too without thee now
Breath-haunted corpses move, Antiochus.
Thou goest attended to a quiet air;
Doomed still to live we for a while remain
Expecting what the gods have yet in store.

SECTION TWO

THREE PROSE POEMS

THREE PROSE POEMS

(1)

AND I asked Madame Kobayashi : tell us what you know of the Mother. And she said candidly : she came here to learn Japanese and to be one of us. But we had so much to learn from her and her charming and unpredictable ways.

She was a sweet friend. She was clever, very clever. An artist to her finger-tips, she would not mind drawing a colour-sketch of mine, which I have treasured to this day.

Both of us were young. And both of us were peering to glimpse a lovelier landscape and gaze at a bluer sky. She revered a master from the ancient land of the Buddha. And she felt sure that his was the gospel of the morrow, the Veda of the dawning day. Her eyes glistened with a new delight and wonder when she spoke to me of him.

But I was a Buddhist. Okhata, my master, had taught me the mystery of meditation, the still sitting of the lovely statue at Nara. My husband, a surgeon, had given up opening the abdomens of men. He counselled them instead to go to Nature for a cure and to sit still in the manner of Okhata, to brood on the navel-lotus that folds or unfolds the health of body and soul.

But your Mother said that the land of the spirit was one. She meditated with me in her lovely attic. We sat together and explored our inner depths, each in her own way. She made me realise that we thought the same thoughts and beheld the same vision.

I loved her dearly. Have you seen those lovely wistaria flowers trailing down the roof of the Kasuga shrine at Nara ? We call them *hooji*. My friend loved those flowers. She was

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

one with them. She called herself *hoojiko*, when she thought of having a Japanese name. My first name is Nobuko. *Nobu* means 'faith'.

There comes a crisis in every man's life and shatters all his dreams. He goes through life, his soul a clod, unless he rebuilds them again. And it was my fate to walk through a desert for a while.

My friend left Kyoto. My master passed away two years after she left. And my husband died a few years later. We had no children. I was left alone in this wide, wide world to pick my way and to choose my dreams.

My parents desired that their widowed daughter should live with them in Tokyo. The members of the still-sitting group, which had its branches all over Japan, insisted that I should continue in Kyoto and carry on the work of my master and my husband.

Kyoto was my home. Here was my life work, my mission, awaiting accomplishment. I stepped into the void created by the demise of my master and my husband. I welcomed the men of diverse faiths that were eager to learn the art of sitting still. We had weekly sittings and fortnightly sittings. We had our monthly journal and our annual sessions. Still-sitting centres sprang up all over Japan and five thousand men and women could be seen sitting in meditation at the annual session. All work has its tribulation and mine too had its own. When the Second World War came, the centres were diminished in number. The journal had to cease publication. My father died in Tokyo in an air-raid. I brought my aged mother here from Tokyo, to look after her. I revived the journal when the War was over. The centres are coming up again. I have worked for thirty-seven years, not in vain. Some friends advised me to go to England as there were a number of maladed minds there as a result of the war and in need of help. But Japan is no better and my work lies here in the country of my birth.

THREE PROSE POEMS

Numerous were the sceptics that questioned the utility of still-sitting and the vanity of brooding over the navel lotus. But they are coming round one by one, now that the American scientists are speaking of the diaphragm going up and down !

Yes, I should love to come to India and go to Pondicherry. But that can only be when my mother does not need my help any longer.

I think, now and again, of writing to my friend. I wish to send her a copy of my journal. Do you think she will read my letter ? Will she reply ? I do not know, for now she has become the Mother !

And when I see her again, I will put both my arms around her and cling to her, feeding my starved love of thirty seven long years. Will the members of your Ashram be angry with me if I behave that way ? For, she is now—the Mother !

Yes. She is the Mother to you, but always a dear, dear friend of mine. It was my great good fortune that, in this strange but explicable world, I should have met this jewel of my heart and this friend of my soul. The perfume of those two years, when we lived like twin roses on the same stalk, lingers like incense around the divine altar and sways serenely in the sanctuary of my mind.

(2)

And we asked Ohkawa : tell us what you know of the Mother.

A light broke from his blind eyes like the blank splendour of the mild moon.

And he replied smiling : I shall tell you of the Mother and of the great life we lived in the dawn-days of Asia.

I drank deep of Indian thought when I was young and I dreamed of a new Asia. I harboured Rash Bihari Bose and Gupta in exile.

I attended every meeting at which an Indian scholar

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

spoke. I went and listened to him in the hope of finding my soul.

In *The Japanese Observer*, before the First World War, I had read about Sri Aurobindo. I asked for his address, but in vain.

It happened one day that Hara Prasad came to Japan. He spoke on Indian philosophy.

I went and listened to him. I was one of the fifty men and women who attended.

Among them was a young lady who stirred me to my depths.

Something in her drew me to her,—call it grace, call it the immutable light of the polar star that makes the magnet point to its own centre.

A fragrance was wafted from her to me as from Paradise, sweet with the scent of immemorial days.

There was a light in her eyes as of the great morning of the world that was about to dawn.

The lecturer spoke clearly, even eloquently. I heard him mechanically. But my soul was listening eagerly to the silence in her depths and straining to catch a glimpse of the vastnesses in her soul.

I saw Hara Prasad the next morning. And what was my surprise when he said that this very lady had desired to see me !

I was thrilled.

I was moved to the very roots of my heart.

I met her as a brother and friend and was privileged to be her fellow-worker, not realising what great cause I worked for and with what success beyond my dreams.

She and her friends dreamed of a new Asia, a new world. They were in living touch with another who dreamed dreams and saw visions in the ancient land of the Buddha. That was Sri Aurobindo himself. I was destined to work with the collaborators of the very seer whose whereabouts I could not know.

I was drawn into the magic circle of their light and, all unconscious, I lived on the very edge of heaven.

THREE PROSE POEMS

We lived together for a year. We sat together in meditation every night for an hour. I practised Zen and they practised yoga. But these twin paths led us to the same mountain heights.

You would like to know, my young friend, what struck me about your Mother.

She had a will that moved mountains and an intellect sharp as the edge of a sword.

Her thought was clarity itself and her resolve stronger than the roots of a giant oak.

Her mystic depths were deeper than the ocean. But her intellect was a plummet that could sound her deepest depths.

An artist, she could paint pictures of an unearthly loveliness. A musician, she enchanted my soul when she played on an organ or guitar. A scientist, she could formulate a new heaven and earth, a new cosmogony.

I do not know what Mira had not become or was not capable of becoming.

But to me she was a sister and comrade in spirit.

That is how I know her.

You would like to know whether I have measured her vision and assessed her spirit.

But I was a friend, an intimate member of the family. I was her brother.

You have known her as the Divine. And the Divine I have known as a friend and sister. She was beautiful in western clothes. And she looked surpassingly lovely when she wore a kimono. If I could but see, I would surely have said that she looked equally lovely in an Indian saree.

To measure is to be apart and to assess is to be far away. Distance alone can ensure description.

How could I, who lived in the very heart of Fujiyama, tell you about the volume of its fire and flame and the dimensions of its light?

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

(3)

And we asked Madame Ohkawa : tell us what you
of the Mother.

And she replied, saying : I knew her very well. She
one of those blessed spirits that one learns to love heart
soul.

She came from the far-off land of France. But it was
feeling that she was all along, like me, a daughter of Japa.
I could swear that she was my very sister whenever she wore
a kimono.

It was for a brief while that she sojourned here. But great
was my happiness when I lived with her. And when she went
away, there was a mist in my eyes like the autumnal mist
that hangs over Tokyo and on the ocean around.

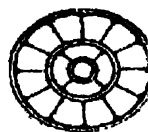
I do not know what it is to be a mother. But I probably
know more than any other what it is to be a sister.

I sometimes feel that I should have cooked and sent
more dishes to Mira when she was here. That would have
made me happier still.

I often think of her, as of a sister in a far-off land. A
fellow-countryman of yours was here some years ago. I gave
him a wicker lamp, made of bamboo, to be presented to
Mira. Did he ever give it to her ?

I feel that I should send a gift with you to her. But how do
I know ? How can I be sure that it will reach her ? It is better
that I wait and give it myself to Mira when I meet her again !

V. K. GOKAK



THE MESSAGE

Only those years that are passed uselessly make you grow old.

A year spent uselessly is a year during which no progress has been accomplished, no growth in consciousness has been achieved, no further step has been taken towards perfection.

Consecrate your life to the realisation of something higher and broader than yourself and you will never feel the weight of the passing years.



The Mother giving a message to the All India Radio on 21st February, 1958, on the occasion of the Jubilee Celebrations on completion of her eightieth year

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PUBLISHERS' NOTE

This drama is one of the earlier works of Sri Aurobindo on a major scale. Written in Baroda, it has a curious history attached to it. Sri Aurobindo seems to have had an especial fondness for this youthful creation of his and so it was particularly mentioned in the Introduction to the Collected Poems and Plays as one of the two works—the other being a translation of Kalidasa's Meghaduta (Cloud-Messenger)—that had been lost in the course of the many turmoils and vicissitudes that a busy political life had meant in India at the beginning of the century.

The Kalidasa-manuscript is still untraced. But by a strange turn of destiny the drama, after it had lain buried in the Government archives for nearly fifty years, was recovered and saved—thanks to the alert curiosity of a record-keeper—just as it was being disposed of as waste paper. The notebook in which it had been written was an exhibit in the famous Alipore Conspiracy Case, and it still bears the seals and signatures of a British Court of Justice as the page printed here in facsimile will show. The manuscript is a neat copy in the author's own hand and has been well preserved in spite of its age and the treatment to which it was subjected.

The story of its salvage is told in some detail in the Appendix by Sri S. C. Chakrabarti, Judge, Alipore.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA

<i>Haroun al Rasheed :</i>	Caliph.
<i>Jaafar :</i>	his Vizier.
<i>Shaikh Ibrahim :</i>	Superintendent of the Caliph's gardens.
<i>Mesrour :</i>	Haroun's friend and companion.
<i>Mohamad bin Suleyman of</i> <i>Zayni :</i>	Haroun's cousin, King of Bassora.
<i>Alfazzal Ibn Sawy :</i>	his chief Vizier.
<i>Nureddene :</i>	son of Alfazzal.
<i>Almuene bin Khakan :</i>	second Vizier of Bassora.
<i>Fareed :</i>	his son.
<i>Salar :</i>	confident of Alzayni.
<i>Murad :</i>	a Turk Captain of Police in Bassora.
<i>Ajebe :</i>	nephew of Almuene.
<i>Sunjar :</i>	a Chamberlain of the Palace of Bassora.
<i>Aziz :</i>	merchants of Bassora.
<i>Abdullah :</i>	
<i>Muazzim :</i>	a broker.
<i>Azeem :</i>	steward of Alfazzal.
<i>Harkoos :</i>	an Ethiopian eunuch in Ibn Sawy's household.
<i>Kareem :</i>	a fisherman of Bagdad.
<i>Slave, Soldiers, Executioners.</i>	
<i>Ameena :</i>	wife of Alfazzal Ibn Sawy.
<i>Doonya :</i>	his niece.
<i>Anice-aljalice :</i>	a Persian slave-girl.
<i>Khatoon</i>	wife of Almuene, sister of Ameena.
<i>Balkis :</i>	sisters, slave-girls of Ajebe.
<i>Mymoona :</i>	
<i>Slave-girls</i>	

Act I

Basora.

Scene I In antechamber in the Palace.

Murad; Sungar.

Mur. Chamberlain, I tell thee I will not bear it an hour longer than it takes my feet to carry me to the King's audience-room and my voice to number my wrongs. Let him choose between me, a man and one made in God's image, and this brutish amalgam of gorilla and Barbary ape whom he calls his Vizier.

Sung. You are not alone in your wrongs; all Basora and half the Court complain of his tyrannies.

Mur. And as if all that were too little for his heavy-handed malice, he must saddle us with his son's misdoings too, who is as like him as the young baboon is to the adult ape.

Sung. It is a cub, a monkey of mischief, a rod on the soles would go far to tame. But who shall dare apply that? Murad, be wary. The King, who is the King and therefore blameless, will not have his black angel dispraised. Complain rather to Alfagyal ibn Sawy, the good Vizier.

ACT I

Bassora

SCENE I

An antechamber in the Palace

Murad, Sunjar

Murad

Chamberlain, I tell thee I will not bear it an hour longer than it takes my feet to carry me to the King's audience-room and my voice to number my wrongs. Let him choose between me, a man and one made in God's image, and this brutish amalgam of gorilla and Barbary ape whom he calls his Vizier.

Sunjar

You are not alone in your wrongs ; all Bassora and half the Court complain of his tyrannies.

Murad

And as if all were too little for his heavy-handed malice, he must saddle us with his son's misdoings too, who is as like him as the young baboon is to the adult ape.

Sunjar

It is a cub, a monkey of mischief, a rod on the soles would go far to tame. But who shall dare apply that? Murad, be wary. The king,—who is the king and therefore blameless,—will not have his black angel dispraised. Complain rather to Alfazzal Ibn Sawy, the good Vizier.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Murad

The kind Alfazzal ! Bassora is bright only because of his presence.

Sunjar

I believe you. He has the serenity and brightness of a nature that never willingly did hurt to man or living thing. I think sometimes every good kindly man is like the moon and carries a halo, while a chill cloud moves with dark and malignant natures. When we are near them, we feel it.

Enter Ibn Sawy

Ibn Sawy
(to himself)

The fairest of all slave girls ! here's a task !
Why, my wild handsome roisterer, Nureddene,
My hunter of girls, my snare for hearts of virgins,
Could do this better. And he would strongly like
The mission ; but I think his pretty purchase
Would hardly come undamaged through to the owner.
A perilous transit that would be ! the rogue !
Ten thousand golden pieces hardly buy
Such wonders,—so much wealth to go so idly !
But princes must have sweet and pleasant things
To ease their labours more than common men.
Their labour is not common who are here
The Almighty's burdened high vicegerents charged
With difficult justice and calm-visaged rule.

Sunjar

The peace of the Prophet with thee, thou best of Viziers.

Murad

The peace, Alfazzal Ibn Sawy.

THE VIZIERS OF BASSORA

Act I, Sc. I

Ibn Sawy

And to you also peace. You here, my Captain ?
The city's business ?

Murad

Vizier, and my own !
I would impeach the Vizier Almuene
Before our royal master.

Ibn Sawy

You'll do unwisely.
A dark and dangerous mind is Almuene's,
Yet are there parts in him that well deserve
The favour he enjoys, although too proudly
He uses it and with much personal malice.
Complain not to the King against him, Murad.
He'll weigh his merits with your grievances,
Find these small jealous trifles, those superlative,
And in the end conceive a mute displeasure
Against you.

Murad

I will be guided by you, Sir.

Ibn Sawy

My honest Turk, you will do well.

Sunjar

He's here.

Enter Almuene

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Murad

The peace upon you, son of Khakan.

Almuene

Captain,
You govern harshly. Change your methods, Captain,
Your manners too. You are a Turk; I know you.

Murad

I govern Bassora more honestly
Than you the kingdom.

Almuene

Soldier ! rude Turcoman !

Ibn Sawy

Nay, brother Almuene ! Why are you angry ?

Almuene

That he misgoverns.

Ibn Sawy

In what peculiar instance ?

Almuene

I'll tell you. A city gang the other day
Battered my little mild Fareed most beastly
With staves and cudgels. This fellow's bribed police,
By him instructed, held a ruffian candle
To the outrage. When the rogues were caught, they lied
And got them off before a fool, a Kazi.

Murad

The Vizier's son, as all our city knows,
A misformed urchin full of budding evil,
Ranges the city like a ruffian, shielded
Under his father's formidable name;
And those who lay their hands on him, commit
Not outrage, but a rescue.

Almuene

Turk, I know you.

Ibn Sawy

In all fraternal kindness hear me speak.
What Murad says, is truth. For your Fareed,
However before you he blinks angelically,
Abroad he roars half-devil. Never, Vizier,
Was such a scandal until now allowed
In any Moslem town. Why it is just
Such barbarous outrage as in Christian cities
May walk unquestioned, not in Bassora
Or any seat of culture. It should be mended.

Almuene

Brother, your Nureddene is not all blameless.
He has a name !

Ibn Sawy

His are the first wild startings
Of a bold generous nature. Mettled steeds,
When they have been managed, are the best to mount.
So will my son. If your Fareed's brute courses
As easily turn to gold, I shall be glad.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Almuene

Let him be anything, he is a Vizier's son.
The Turk forgot that.

Ibn Sawy

These are maxims, brother,
Unsuited to our Moslem polity.
They savour of barbarous Europe. But in Islam
All men are equal underneath the King.

Almuene

Well, brother Turk, you are excused.

Murad

Excused !

Viziers, the peace.

Ibn Sawy

I'll follow you.

Almuene

Turk, the peace !

Ibn Sawy

Peace, brother. See to it, brother.

Exit with Murad

Almuene

Brother, peace.
Would I not gladly tweak your ears and nose

And catch your brotherly beard to pluck it out
With sweet fraternal pulls ? Faugh, you babbler
Of virtuous nothings ! some day I'll have you preach
Under the bastinado; you'll howl, you'll howl
Rare sermons there.

(seeing Sunjar)

You ! You ! You spy ? You cavesdrop ?
And I must be rebuked with this to hear it !
Well, I'll remember you.

Sunjar

Sir, I beseech you,
I had no smallest purpose to offend.

Almuene

I know you, dog ! When my back's turned, you bark,
But whine before me. You shall be remembered.

Exit

Sunjar

There goest thou, Almuene, the son of Khakan,
Dog's son, dog's father, and thyself a dog.
Thy birth was where thy end shall be, a dunghill.

Exit

SCENE II

A room in Almuene's house

Almuene, Khatoon

Khatoon

You have indulged the boy till he has lost
The likeness even of manhood. God's great stamp
And heavenly image on his mint's defaced,
Rubbed out, and only the brute metal left
Which never shall find currency again
Among his angels.

Almuene

Oh always clamour, clamour !
I had been happier bedded with a slave,
Whom I could beat to sense when she was froward.

Khatoon

Oh, you'd have done no less by me, I know,
Although my rank's as far above your birth
As some white star in heaven o'erpeers the muck
Of foulest stables, had I not great kin
And swords in the background to avenge me.

Almuene

Termagant,
Some day I'll have you stripped and soundly caned
By your own women, if you grow not gentler.

Khatoon

I shall be glad some day to find your courage.

Enter Fareed, jumping and gyrating

Fareed

Oh father, father, father, father, father !

Khatoon

What means this idiot clamour ? Senseless child,
Can you not walk like some more human thing
Or talk like one at least ?

Almuene

Dame, check once more
My gallant boy, try once again to break
His fine and natural spirit with your chidings,
I'll drive your teeth in, lady or no lady.

Fareed

Do, father, break her teeth ! She's always scolding.
Sometimes she beats me when you're out. Do break them,
I shall so laugh !

Almuene

My gamesome goblin !

Khatoon

You prompt him
To hate his mother ; but do not lightly think
The devil you strive to raise up from that hell

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Which lurks within us all, sealed commonly
By human shame and Allah's supreme grace,—
But you ! you scrape away the seal, would take
The full flame of the inferno, not the gusts
Of smoke jet out in ordinary men ;—
Think not this imp will limit with his mother
Unnatural revolt ! You will repent this.

Exit

Fareed

Girl, father ! such a girl ! a girl of girls !
Buy me my girl !

Almuene

What girl, you leaping madcap ?

Fareed

In the slave-market for ten thousand pieces.
Such hands ! such eyes ! such hips ! such legs ! I am
Impatient till my elbows meet around her.

Almuene

My amorous wagtail ! What, my pretty hunchback,
You have your trophies too among the girls
No less than the straight dainty Nureddene,
Our Vizier's pride ? Ay, you have broken seals ?
You have picked locks, my burglar ?

Fareed

You have given me,
You and my mother, such a wicked hump
To walk about with, the girls jeer at me.
I have only a chance with blind ones. 'Tis a shame.

Almuene

How will you make your slavegirl love you, hunch ?

Fareed

She'll be my slavegirl and she'll have to love me.

Almuene

Whom would you marry, hunchback, for a wager ?
Will the King's daughter tempt you ?

Fareed

Pooh ! I've got
My eye upon my uncle's pretty niece.
I like her.

Almuene

The Vizier, my peculiar hatred !
Wagtail, you must not marry there.

Fareed

I hate him too
And partly for that cause will marry her,
To beat her twice a day and let him know it.
He will be grieved to the heart.

Almuene

You're my own lad.

Fareed

And then she's such a nice tame pretty thing,
Will sob and tremble, kiss me when she's told,

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Not like my mother, frown, scold, nag all day.
But, dad, my girl ! buy me my girl !

Almuene

Come, wagtail.

Ten thousand pieces ! 'tis exorbitant.
Two thousand, not a dirham more. The seller
Does wisely if he takes it, glad to get
A piastre for her. Call the slaves, Fareed.

Fareed

Hooray ! hoop ! what a time I'll have ! Cafoor !

Exit, calling

Almuene

'Tis thus a boy should be trained up, not checked,
Rebuked and punished till the natural man
Is killed in him and a tame virtuous block
Replace the lusty pattern Nature made.
I do not value at a brazen coin
The man who has no vices in his blood,
Never took toll of women's lips in youth
Nor warmed his nights with wine. Your moralists
Teach one thing, Nature quite another; which of these
Is likely to be right ? Yes, cultivate,
But on the plan that she has mapped. Give way,
Give way to the inspired blood of youth
And you shall have a man, no scrupulous fool,
No ethical malingerer in the fray;
A man to lord it over other men,
Soldier or Vizier or adventurous merchant,
The breed of Samson. Man with such youth your armies.
Of such is an imperial people made
Who send their colonists and conquerors

Across the world, till the wide earth contains
One language only and a single rule.
Yes, nature is your grand imperialist,
No moral sermonizer. Rude, hardy stocks
Transplant themselves, expand, outlast the storms
And heat and cold, not slips too gently nurtured
Or lapped in hothouse warmth. Who conquered earth
For Islam ? Arabs trained in robbery,
Heroes, robust in body and desire.
I'll get this slavegirl for Fareed to help
His education on. Be lusty, son,
And breed me grandsons like you for my stock.

Exit

SCENE 3

The Slave Market

*Muazzim and his man; Balkis and Mymoona, Ajebe;
Aziz, Abdullah and other merchants*

Muazzim

Well, gentlemen, the biddings, the biddings ! Will you begin, sir, for an example now ?

Balkis

Who is the handsome youth in that rich dress ?

Muazzim

It is Ajebe, the Vizier's nephew, a good fellow with a bad uncle.

Balkis

Praise me to them poetically, broker.

Muazzim

I promise you for the poetry. Biddings, gentlemen.

A merchant

Three thousand for the pretty one.

Muazzim

Why, sir, I protest ! Three thousand pieces ! Look at her ! Allah be good to me ! You shall not find her equal from China to Frangistan. Seven thousand, say I.

Aziz

The goods are good goods, broker, but the price heavy.

Muazzim

Didst thou say heavy? Allah avert the punishment from thee, merchant Aziz. Heavy !

Balkis

(to *Ajebe*)

Will you not bid for me ? My mirror tells me
That I am pretty, and I can tell, who know it,
I have a touch upon the lute will charm
The winds to hear me, and my voice is sweeter
Than any you have heard in Bassora.
Will you not bid ?

Ajebe

And wherefore do you choose me
From all these merchants, child ?

Balkis

I cannot say
That I have fallen in love with you. Your mother
Is kind and beautiful, I read her in your face,
And it is she I'd serve.

Ajebe

I bid, Muazzim,
Five thousand for this little lady.

Muazzim

Five !
And she who chose you too ! Bid seven or nothing.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Ajebe

Well, well, six thousand, not a dirham more.

Muazzim

Does any bid beyond ?

Merchant

Let me see, let me see.

Abdullah

Fie, leave them, man ! You 'll have no luck with her,
Crossing her wishes.

Merchant

Let her go, let her go.

Muazzim

To you, Sir, she belongs.

Balkis

But if you'll have me,
Then take my sister too; we make one heart
Inseparably.

Ajebe

She's fair, but not like you.

Balkis

If we are parted, I shall sicken and die
For want of her, then your six-thousand's wasted.

Muazzim

They make a single lot.

Ajebe

Two thousand more then.
Give her in that, or else the sale is off.

Muazzim

That's giving her away. Well, take her, take her.

Ajebe

I'll send the money.

Exit with Balkis and Mymoona

Abdullah

What, a bargain, broker ?

Muazzim

Not much, not much; the owner'll have some profit.

Aziz

The Vizier !

Enter Ibn Sawy

Abdullah

Noble Alfazzal ! There will be
Good sales today in the market, since his feet
Have trod here.

Merchants

Welcome, welcome, noble Vizier.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Ibn Sawy

The peace be on you all. I thank you, sirs,
What, good Abdullah, all goes well at home ?

Abdullah

My brother's failed, sir.

Ibn Sawy

Make me your treasurer.
I am ashamed to think good men should want
While I indulge in superfluities.
Well, broker, how's the market ? Have you slaves
That I can profit by ?

Muazzim

Admired Vizier,
There's nothing worth the kindness of your gaze.
Yet do but tell me what you need, I'll fit you
With stuff quite sound and at an honest price.
The other brokers are mere pillagers,
But me you know.

Ibn Sawy

If there's an honest broker,
You are that marvel, I can swear so much.
Now pick me out your sweetest thing in girls,
Perfect in beauty, wise as Sheban Balkis,
Yet more in charm than Helen of the Greeks,
Then name your price.

Muazzim

I have the very marvel.
You shall not see her equal in a century.

She has the Koran and the law by heart;
Song, motion, music and calligraphy
Are natural to her, and she contains
All science in one corner of her mind;
Yet learning less than wit; and either lost
In the mere sweetness of her speech and beauty.
You'll hardly have her within fifteen thousand;
She is a nonpareil.

Ibn Sawy

It is a sum.

Muazzim

Nay, see her only. Khalid, bring the girl.

Exit Khalid

I should not ask you, sir, but has your son
Authority from you to buy ? He has
The promise of a necklet from me.

Ibn Sawy

A necklet !

Muazzim

A costly trifle. "Send it to such a house",
He tells me like a prince, "and dun my father
For the amount. I know you'll clap it on
As high as Elburz, you old swindler. Fleece him !"
He is a merry lad.

Ibn Sawy

Fleece me ! The rogue !
The handsome naughty rogue ! I'll pull his curls for this.
The house ? To whom is it given ?

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Muazzim

Well, sir, it is
A girl, a dainty Christian. I fear she has given
Something more precious far than what he pays her with.

Ibn Sawy

No doubt, no doubt. The rogue ! quite conscienceless.
I'm glad you told me of this. Dun me ! Well,
The rascal's frank enough, that is one comfort;
He adds no meaner vices, fear or lying,
To his impetuous faults. The blood is good
And in the end will bear him through. There's hope.
I'll come, Muazzim.

Exit

Muazzim

The son repeats the father,
But with a dash of quicker, wilder blood.
Here's Khalid with the Persian.

Enter Khalid with Anice-aljalice

Khalid, run
And call the Vizier, he was here just now.

Exit Khalid. Enter Almuene, Fareed and slaves

Fareed

There she is, father; there, there, there !

Almuene

You deal, Sir? I know you well. Today be more honest than is your wont. Is she bid for ?

Muazzim

(aside)

Iblis straight out of Hell with his hobgoblin ! *(aloud)* Sir, we are waiting for the good Vizier, who is to bid for her.

Almuene

Here is the Vizier and he bids for her.
Two thousand for the lass. Who bids against me ?

Muazzim

Vizier Almuene, you are too great to find any opposers, and you know it; but as you are great, I pray you bid greatly. Her least price is ten thousand.

Almuene

Ten thousand, swindler ! Do you dare to cheat
In open market ? Two thousand's her outside.
This spindly common wench ! Accept it, broker,
Or call for bids; refuse at your worst risk.

Muazzim

It is not the rule of these sales. I appeal to you, gentlemen. What, do you all steal off from my neighbourhood ? Vizier, she is already bespoken by your elder, Ibn Sawy.

Almuene

I know your broking tricks, you shallow rascal.
Call for more bids, you cheater, call for bids.

Muazzim

Abuse me not, Almuene bin Khakan ! There is justice in Bassora and the good Ibn Sawy will decide between us.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Almuene

Us ! Between us ! Thou dirty broking cheat,
Am I thy equal ? Throw him the money, Nubian.
But if he boggle, seize him, have him flat
And powerfully persuade him with your sticks.
You, beauty, come. What, hussy, you draw back ?

Fareed

Father, let me get behind her with my horse-tickler. I will trot
her home in a twinkling.

Muazzim

This is flat tyranny. I will appeal
To the good Vizier and our gracious King.

Almuene

Impudent thief ! have first thy punishment
And howl appeal between the blows. . Seize him.

Enter Khalid with Ibn Sawy

Muazzim

Protect me, Vizier, from this unjust man,
This tyrant.

Ibn Sawy

What is this ?

Muazzim

He takes by force
The perfect slavegirl I had kept for you,

And at a beggarly, low, niggard's price
I'd not accept for a black kitchen-girl ;
Then, when I named you, fell to tyrant rage,
Ordering his slaves to beat me.

Ibn Sawy

Is this true,
Vizier ?

Almuene

Someone beat out my foggy brains ?
I took it for a trick, a broker's trick.
What, you bespoke the girl ? You know I'd lose
My hand and tongue rather than they should hurt you.
Well, well, begin the bidding.

Ibn Sawy

First, a word.
Vizier, this purchase is not for myself ;
'Tis for the King. I deem you far too loyal
To bid against your master, needlessly
Taxing his treasures. But if you will,
You have the right. By justice and the law
The meanest may compete here. Do you bid ?

Almuene

(*to himself*)

He baulks me everywhere. (*aloud*) The perfect slave girl ?
No, I'll not bid. Yet it is most unlucky,
My son has set his heart upon this very girl.
Will you not let him have her, Ibn Sawy.

Ibn Sawy

I grieve that he must be so disappointed,
But there's no help. Were it my own dear son

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

And he should pine to death for her, I would not
Indulge him here. The King comes first.

Almuene

Quite first.
Well, shall I see you at your house today ?

Ibn Sawy

State business, brother ?

Almuene

Our states and how to join
Their linkèd loves yet closer. I have a thought
Touching Fareed here and your orphaned niece.

Ibn Sawy

I understand you. We will talk of it.
Brother, you know my mind about your boy.
He is too wild and rude ; I would not trust
My dear soft girl into such dangerous hands,
Unless he showed a quick and strange amendment.

Almuene

It is the wildness of his youth. Provide him
A wife and he will soon domesticate.
Pen these wild torrents into quiet dams
And they will fertilize the kingdom, brother.

Ibn Sawy

I hope so. Well, we'll talk.

Almuene

Fareed, come with me.

Fareed

I'll have my girl ! I'll beat them all and have her !

Almuene

Wagtail, your uncle takes her.

Fareed

Break his head then,
Whip the proud broker up and down the square
And take her without payment. Why are you
The Vizier, if you cannot do your will ?

Almuene

Madcap, she's for the King, be quiet.

Fareed

Oh !

Almuene

Come, I will buy you prettier girls than this
By hundredweights and tons.

Fareed

She has such hair ! such legs !
God damn the Vizier and the King and you !
I'll take her yet.

Exit in a rage, followed by Almuene & slaves

Muazzim

This is a budding Vizier !
Sir, look at her ; were mine mere broker's praises ?

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Ibn Sawy

You, mistress ! Does the earth contain such beauty ?

Muazzim

Did I not tell you so ?

Ibn Sawy

'Tis marvellous,
And if her mind be equal to her body,
She is an emperor's portion. What's your name,
Sweet wonder ?

Anice-aljalice

Anice-aljalice they call me.

Ibn Sawy

What is your history ?

Anice-aljalice

My parents sold me
In the great famine.

Ibn Sawy

What, is your mould indeed a thing of earth ?
Peri, have you not come disguised from heaven
To snare us with your lovely smiles, you marvel ?

Anice-aljalice

I am a slave and mortal.

Ibn Sawy

Prove me that.

Anice-aljalice

A peri, sir, has wings, but I have none.

Ibn Sawy

I see that difference only. Well now, her price ?

Muazzim

She is a gift to thee, O Vizier.

Ibn Sawy

Ceremony ?

I rate her value at ten thousand clear.

Muazzim

It is the price expected at your hands,
Though from a private purse we'd have full value.
Keep her ten days with you; her beauty's worn
With journeying and its harsh fatigues. Give rest,
Give baths, give food, then shade your eyes to gaze at her.

Ibn Sawy

You counsel wisely. There's my poaching rascal,—
But I will seal her fast even from his questings,
The peace, Muazzim.

Muazzim

Peace, thou good Vizier, loaded with our blessings.

Exeunt

SCENE 4

A room in the women's apartments of Ibn Sawy's house

Ameena, Doonya

Ameena

Call, Doonya, to the eunuch once again
And ask if Nureddene has come.

Doonya

Mother,
What is the use ? You know he has not come.
Why do you fret your heart, sweet mother, for him ?
Bad coins are never lost.

Ameena

Fie, Doonya ! bad ?
He is not bad, but wild, a trifle wild;
And the one little fault's like a stray curl
Among his clustering golden qualities,
That graces more than it disfigures him.
Bad coin ! Oh, Doonya, even the purest gold
Has some alloy, so do not call him bad.

Doonya

Sweet, silly mother ! why, I called him that
Just to hear you defend him.

Ameena

You laugh at me,—
Oh, you all laugh. And yet I will maintain

My Nureddene's the dearest lad in Bassora,—
Let him disprove't who can,—in all this realm
The beautifullest and kindest.

Doonya

So the girls think
Through all our city. Oh, I laugh at you
And at myself. I'm sure I am as bad
A sister to him as you are a mother.

Ameena

I a bad mother, Doonya ?

Doonya

The worst possible.
You spoil him; so do I; so does his father;
So does all Bassora,—especially the girls !

Ameena

Why, who could be unkind to him or see
His merry eyes grow clouded with remorse ?

Doonya

Is it he who comes ?

She goes out and returns

It is my uncle, mother,
And there's a girl with him,—I think she is
A copy of Nureddene in white and red.
Why, as I looked downstairs, she smiled up at me
And took the heart out of my body with the smile.
Are you going to have a rival at your years,
Poor mother ? 'Tis late for uncle to go wooing.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Ameena

A rival, you mad girl !

Enter Ibn Sawy and Anice-aljalice

Ibn Sawy

Come forward, child.

Here is a slave girl, Ameena, I've bought
For our great Sultan. Keep her from your son,
Your scapegrace son. My life upon it, dame !
If he touches her, I'm gone.

Ameena

I'll see to it.

Ibn Sawy

Let a strong eunuch with a naked sword
Stand at her door. Bathe her and feed her daintily.
Your son ! see that he does not wheedle you.
You've spoilt him so, there is no trusting you,
You tender, foolish heart.

Ameena

I spoil him, husband !

Ibn Sawy

Most damnably. Whenever I would turn
Wholesomely harsh to him, you come between
And coax my anger. Therefore he is spoilt.

Doonya

Oh, uncle mine, when you are harsh, the world
Grows darker with your frown. See, how I tremble !

Ibn Sawy

Oh, are you there, my little satirist ?
When were you whipped last ?

Doonya

When you last were harsh.

Ibn Sawy

You shall be married off. I will not have you
Mocking an old and reverend man like me.
Whom will you marry, chit ?

Doonya

An old, old man,
Just such a smiling harsh old man as you,
None else.

Ibn Sawy

And not a boy like young Farced ?
His father wishes it ; he too, I think.

Doonya

Throw me from this high window to the court
Or tell me ere the day and I will leap.

Ibn Sawy

Is he so bad ? I thought it. No, my niece,
You marry not with Khakan's evil stock,
Although there were no other bridegroom living.
I'll leave you, Ameena. Anice, I have a son,
Handsome and wanton. Let him not behold you !

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

You are wise and spirited beyond your years,
Above your sex ; I trust in your discretion.

Anice-aljalice

I will be careful, sir. Yet trust in bars
And portals, not in me. If he should find me,
I am his slave and born to do his will.

Ibn Sawy

Be careful, dame.

Ameena

How fair you are, small lady !
'Tis better truly he should see you not.
Doonya, be careful of her. I'll go before
And make your casket ready for you, gem.
Bring her behind me, Doonya.

Doonya

(leaping on Anice)

What's your name,
You smiling wonder, what's your name ? Your name ?

Anice-aljalice

If you will let me a little breathe, I'll tell you.

Doonya

Tell it me without breathing.

Anice-aljalice

It's too long

Doonya

Let's hear it.

Anice-aljalice

Anice-aljalice.

Doonya

Anice,

There is a sea of laughter in your body ;
I find it billowing there beneath the calm
And rippling sweetly out in smiles. You beauty !
And I love laughers. Wherefore for the King ?
Why not for me ? Does the King ever laugh,
I wonder ?

She runs out

Anice-aljalice

My King is here. But they would give me
To some thick-bearded swart and grizzled Sultan
Who'd see me once a week and keep me penned
For service, not for mirth and love. My prince
Is like our Persian boys, fair-faced and merry,
Fronting the world with glad and open looks
That make the heart rejoice. Ten days ! 'tis much.
Kingdoms have toppled in ten days.

Doonya returns

Doonya

Come, Anice.

I wish my cousin Nureddene had come
And caught you here. What fun it would have been !

Exeunt

ACT II

Bassora

SCENE I

Ibn Sawy's house. An upper chamber in the women's appartments

Doonya, Anice-aljalice

Doonya

You living sweet romance, you come from Persia.
'Tis there, I think, they fall in love at sight ?

Anice-aljalice

But will you help me, Doonya, will you help me ?
To him, to him, not to that grizzled King !
I am near Heaven with Hell that's waiting for me.

Doonya

I know, I know ! you feel as I would, child,
If told that in ten days I had to marry
My cruel boisterous cousin. I will help you.
But strange ! to see him mercly pass and love him !
Did he look back at you ?

Anice-aljalice

While he could see me.

Doonya

Yes, that was Nureddene.

Anice-aljalice

You'll help me ?

Doonya

Yes,
With all my heart and soul and brains and body.
But how ? My uncle's orders are so strict !

Anice-aljalice

And do you always heed your uncle's orders,
You dutiful niece ?

Doonya

Rigidly, when they suit me.
It shall be done although my punishment
Were even to wed Fareed. But who can say
When he'll come home ?

Anice-aljalice

Comes he not daily then ?

Doo nya

When he's not hawking. Questing, child, for doves,
White doves.

Anice-aljalice

I'll stop all that when he is mine.

Doonya

Will you ? and yet I think you will, nor find it
A task at all. You can do it ?

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Anice-aljalice

I will.

Doonya

You have relieved my conscience of a load.
Who blames me ? I do this to reform my cousin,
Gravely, deliberately, with serious thought,
And am quite virtuously disobedient.
I almost feel a long white beard upon my chin,
The thing's so wise and sober. Gravely, gravely!

She marches out, solemnly stroking an imaginary beard

Anice-aljalice

My heart beats reassuringly within.
The destined Prince will come and all bad spells
Be broken; then—You angels up in Heaven
Who guard sweet shame and woman's modesty,
Hide deep your searching eyes with those bright wings.
It is not wantonness, though in a slave
Permitted, spurs me forward. O tonight
Let sleep your pens, in your rebuking volumes
Record not this. I am on such a brink,
A hound of horror baying at my heels,
I cannot pause to think what fire of blushes
I choose to flee through, nor how safe cold eyes
May censure me. I pass though I should burn.
You cannot bid me pick my careful steps !
Oh, no, the danger is too near. I run
By the one road that's left me, to escape,
To escape, into the very arms I love.

SCENE 2

Ibn Sawy's house. A room in the women's appartments

Ameena, Doonya

Ameena

Has he come in ?

Doonya

He has.

Ameena

For three long days !
I will reprove him—Call him to me, Doonya.
I will be stern.

Doonya

That's right. Lips closer there !
And just try hard to frown. That's mildly grim
And ought to shake him. Now you spoil all by laughing.

Ameena

Away, you madcap ! Call him here.

Doonya

The culprit
Presents himself unsummoned.

Enter Nureddene

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Nureddene

(at the door)

Ayoob, Ay^oob

A bowl of sherbet in my chamber.

(entering)

Well, mother,
Here I am back, your errant gadabout,
Your vagabond scapegrace, tired of truancy
And very hungry for my mother's arms.
It's good to see you smile !

Ameena

My dearest son !

Nureddene

Why, Doonya, cousin, what wild face is this ?

Doonya

This is a frown, a frown, upon my forehead.
Do you not tremble when you see it ? No ?
To tell you the plain truth, my wandering brother,
We both were practising a careful grimness
And meant to wither you with darting flames
From basilisk eyes and words more sharp than swords,
Burn you and frizzle into simmering cinders.
Oh, you'd have been a dolorous spectacle
Before we had finished with you ! Ask her else.

Ameena

Heed her not, Nureddene. But tell me, child,
Is this well done to wander vagrant-like

Leaving your mother to anxieties
And such alarms ? Oh, we will have to take
Some measure with you !

Doonya

Oh, now, now, we are stern !

Nureddene

Mother, I only range abroad and learn
Of manners and of men to fit myself
For the after-time.

Doonya

True, true, and of the taste
Of different wines and qualities of girls;
What eyes Damascus sends, the Cairene sort,
Bagdad's red lips and Yemen's willowy figures,
Who has the smallest waist in Bassora,
Or who the shapeliest little foot moonbright
Beneath her anklets. These are sciences
And should be learned by sober masculine graduates.
Should they not, cousin ?

Nureddene

These too are not amiss,
Doonya, for world-wise men. And do you think,
Dear Mother, I could learn the busy world
Here, in your lap, within the shadowy calm
Of women's chambers ?

Ameena

No, child, no. You see,
Doonya, it is not all so bad, this wandering.
And I am sure they much o'erstate his faults
Who tell of them.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Doonya

Oh, this is very grim !

Ameena

But, Nureddene, you must not be so wild;
Or when we are gone, what will you do, if now
You learn no prudence ? All your patrimony
You'll waste, — and then ?

Nureddene

Then, mother, life begins.

I shall go forth, a daring errant-knight,
To my true country out in faery-land;
Wander among the Moors, see Granada,
The delicate city made of faery stone,
Cairo, Tangier, Aleppo, Trebizond;
Or in the East, where old enchantment dwells,
Find Pekin of the wooden piles, Delhi
Of the idolaters, its brazen pillar
And huge seven-storied temples sculpture-fretted,
And o'er romantic regions quite unknown
Preach Islam, sword in hand; sell bales of spice
From Bassora to Java and Japan;
Then on through undiscovered islands, seas
And Oceans yet unnamed; yes, everywhere
Catch Danger by the throat where I can find him,—

Doonya

Butcher blood-belching dragons with my blade,
Cut ogres, chop giants, tickle cormorants,—

Nureddene

Then in some land, I have not settled which,—

Doonya

Call it Cumcatchia or Nonsensicum.

Nureddene

Marry a Soldan's daughter, sweet of eye
And crowned with gracious hair, deserving her
By deeds impossible : conduct her armies
Against her foemen, enter iron-walled
Cities besieged with the loud clang of war,
Rescue imperilled kingdoms, 'mid the smoke
Of desperate cities slay victorious kings,
And so extend my lady's empire wide —

Doonya

From Bassora to the quite distant moon.

Nureddene

There I shall reign with beauty and splendour round
In a great palace built of porphyry,
Marble and jasper, with stange columns made
Of coral and fair walls bright-arabesqued
On which the Koran shall be written out
In sapphires and in rubies. I will sit
Drinking from cups of gold delightful wine,
Watching slow dances, while the immortal strain
Of music wanders to its silent home.
And I shall have bright concubines and slaves
Around me crowding all my glorious home
With beautiful faces, thick as stars in heaven.
My wealth shall be so great that I can spend
Millions each day nor feel the want. I'll give
Till there shall be no poor in all my realms,
Nor any grieved; for I shall every night,

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Like Haroon-al-rasheed, the mighty Caliph,
Wander disguised with Jaafar and Masrour
Redressing wrongs, repressing Almuenes,
And set up noble men like my dear father
In lofty places, giving priceless boons,
An unseen Providence to all mankind.

Doonya

And you will marry me, dear Nureddene
To Jaafar, your great Vizier, so that we
Shall never part, but every blessed night
Drink and be merry in your halls, and live
Felicitously for ever and for aye,
So long as full moons shine and brains go wrong
And wine is drunk. I make my suit to you from now,
Caliph of Faeryland.

Nureddene

Your suit is granted.
And meanwhile, Doonya, I amuse myself
With nearer kingdoms, Miriam's wavy locks
And Shazarath-al-Durr's sweet voice of song.

Doonya

And meanwhile, brother, till you get your kingdom,
We shall be grim, quite grim.

Ameena

Your father's angry.
I have not known him yet so moved. My child,
Do not force us to punish you.

Nureddene

With kisses ?
Look, Doonya, at these two dear hypocrites,

She with her gentle honey-worded threats,
He with his stormings. Pooh ! I care not for you.

Ameena

Not care !

Nureddene

No, not a jot for him or you,
My little mother, or only just so much
As a small kiss is worth.

Ameena

I told you, Doonya,
He was the dearest boy in all the world,
The best, the kindest.

Doonya

Oh yes, you told me that.
And was the dearest boy in all the world
Rummaging the regions for the dearest girl,
While the admiring sun danced round the welkin
A triple circuit ?

Nureddene

I have found her, Doonya.

Doonya

The backward glance ?

Ameena

Your father !

Enter Ibn Sawy

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Ibn Sawy

Ameena,
I'm called to the palace; something is afoot.
Ah, rascal ! ah, you villain ! you have come ?

Nureddene

Sir, a long hour.

Ibn Sawy

Rogue ! scamp ! what do you mean ?
Knave, is my house a caravanserai
For you to lodge in when it is your pleasure ?

Nureddene

It is the happiest home in Bassora,
Where the two kindest parents in the world
Excuse their vagabond son.

Ibn Sawy

Hum ! well ! What, fellow,
You will buy trinkets ? You will have me dunned ?
And fleeced ?

Nureddene

Did he dun you ? I hope he asked
A fitting price; I told him to.

Ibn Sawy

Sir, sir,
What game is this to buy your hussies trinkets
And send your father in the bill ? Who taught you
This rule of conduct ?

Nureddene

You, Sir.

Ibn Sawy

I, rascal ?

Nureddene

You told me

That debt must be avoided like a sin.
What other way could I avoid it, Sir,
Yet give the trinket ?

Ibn Sawy

Logic of impudence ?
Tell me, you curled wine-bibbing Aristotle,
Did I tell you also to have mistresses
And buy them trinkets ?

Nureddene

Not in so many words.

Ibn Sawy

So many devils !

Nureddene

But since you did not marry me
Nor buy a beautiful slave for home delight,
I thought you'd have me range outside for pleasures
To get experience of the busy world.
If 'twas an oversight, it may be mended.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Ibn Sawy

I'm dumb !

Nureddene

There is a Persian Muazzim sells,
Whom buy for me,—her rate's ten thousand pieces—

Ibn Sawy

A Persian ! Muazzim sells ! ten thousand pieces !

(to himself)

Where grows this tangle ? I become afraid.

Nureddene

Whom buy for me, I swear I'll be at home,
Quite four days out of seven.

Ibn Sawy

Hear me, young villain !
I'm called to the palace, but when I return,
Look to be bastinadoed, look to be curried
In boiling water. (*aside*) I must blind him well.
Ten days I shall be busy with affairs,
Then for your slavegirl. Bid the broker keep her.
Oh, I forgot ! I swore to pull your curls
For your offences.

Nureddene

I must not let you, Sir;
They are no longer my own property.
There's not a lock that has not been bespoken
For a memento.

Ibn Sawy

What ! What ! Impudent rascal !

(aside)

You handsome laughing rogue ! Hear, Ameena,

Let Doonya sleep with Anice every night.

No, come, hear farther.

Exit with Ameena

Nureddene

O Doonya, Doonya, tall, sweet, laughing Doonya !

I am in love,—drowned, strangled, dead with longing.

Doonya

For the world's Persian ? But she's sold by now.

Nureddene

I asked Muazzim.

Doonya

A quite absolute liar.

Nureddene

O if she is, I'll leave all other cares

And only seek her through an empty world.

Doonya

What, could one backward glance sweep you so forward ?

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Nureddene

Why, Doonya !

Doonya

Brother, I know a thing I know
You do not know. A sweet bird sang it to me
In an upper chamber.

Nureddene

Doonya, you're full of something,
And I must hear it.

Doonya

What will you give me for it ?
None of your nighthawk kisses, cousin mine !
But a mild loving kind fraternal pledge
I'll not refuse.

Nureddene

You are the wickedest, dearest girl
In all the world, the maddest sweetest sister
A sighing lover ever had. Now tell me.

Doonya

More, more ! I must be flattered.

Nureddene

No more. Come, mischief,
You'll keep me in suspense ?

(pulls her ears)

Doonya

Enough, enough !
The Persian—listen and perpend, O lover !
Lend ear while I unfold my wondrous tale,
A tale long, curled and with a tip,—Oh Lord!
I'll clip my tale. The Persian's bought for you
And in the upper chambers.

Nureddene

Doonya, Doonya !
But those two loving hypocrites,—

Doonya

All's meant
To be surprise.

Nureddene

Surprise me no surprises.
I am on fire, Doonya, I am on fire.
The upper chambers ?

Doonya

Stop, stop ! You do not know ;
There is an ogre at her door, a black
White-tusked huge-muscled hideous grinning giant,
Of mood uproarious, horrible of limb,
An Ethiopian fell ycleped Harkoos.

Nureddene

The eunuch !

Doonya

Stop, stop, stop. He has a sword,
A fearful, forceful, formidable blade.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Nureddene

Your eunuch and his sword I mount to heaven
And who shall stop me ?

Exit

Doonya

Stop, stop ! yet stop ! He's off
Like bolt from bowstring. Now the game's afoot
And Bassora's Soldan, Mahomed Alzayni,
May whistle for his slavegirl. I am Fate,
For I upset the plans of Viziers and of Kings.

Exit

SCENE 3

Ibn Sawy's house. The upper chambers of the women's apartments

Doonya, sleeping on a couch. Enter Nureddene and Anice

Nureddene

I told you 'twas the morning.

Anice-aljalice

Morning so early ?

This moment 'twas the evening star ; is that
The matin lustre ?

Nureddene

There is a star at watch beside the moon
Waiting to see you ere it leaves the skies.
Is it your sister Peri ?

Anice-aljalice

It is our star

And guards us both.

Nureddene

It is the star of Anice,
The star of Anice-aljalice who came
From Persia guided by its silver beams
Into these arms of vagrant Nureddene
Which keep her till the end. Sweet, I possess you !
Till now I could not potently believe it.
Strange, strange that I who nothing have deserved,

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Should win what all would covet ! We are fools
Who reach at baubles taking them for stars.
O wiser woman who come straight to Heaven !
But I have wandered by the way and staled
The freshness of delight with gadding pleasures,
Anticipated Love's perfect fruit with sour
And random berries void of real savour.
Oh fool ! had I but known ! What can I say
But once more that I have deserved you not,
Who yet must take you, knowing my undesert,
Whatever come hereafter.

Anice-aljalice

The house is stirring.

Nureddene

Who is this sleeping here ? My cousin Doonya !

Doonya

(waking)

Is morning come ? My blessing on you, children.
Be good and kind, dears ; love each other, darlings.

Nureddene

Dame Mischief, thanks ; thanks, Mother Madcap.

Doonya

Now, whither ?

Nureddene

To earth from Paradise.

Doonya

Wait, wait ! You must not
Walk off the stage before your part is done.
The situation now with open eyes
And lifted hands and chidings. You'll be whipped,
Anice, and Nureddene packed off to Mecca
On penitential legs : I shall be married.

(opening the door)

Oh, our fell Ethiopian snoozing here ?
Snore, noble ogre, snore louder than nature
To excuse your gloomy skin from worse than thwacks.
Wait for me, Nureddene.

Exit

Anice-aljalice

They will be angry.

Nureddene

Oh, with two smiles I'll buy an easy pardon.

Anice-aljalice

Whatever comes, we are each other's now.

Nureddene

Nothing will come to us but happy days,
You, my surpassing jewel, on my neck
Closer to me than my own heartbeats.

Anice-aljalice

Yes,
Closer than kisses, closer than delight,
Close only as love whom sorrow and delight
Cannot diminish, nor long absence change

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Nor daily prodigality of joy
Expend immortal love.

Nureddene

You have the love.

Doonya returns

Doonya

I have told Nuzhath to call mother here.
There will be such a gentle storm.

Enter Aameena at the door

Aameena

Harkoos !

Sleeping !

Harkoos

Gmn—Mmn—

Doonya

Grunted almost like nature,
Thou excellent giant.

Aameena

Harkoos, dost thou sleep ?

Harkoos

Sleep ! I ! I was only pondering a text of Koran with closed eyes,
lady. You give us slaves pitiful small time for our devotions; but 'twill
all be accounted for hereafter.

Ameena

And canst thou meditate beneath the lash ?
For there thou'lt shortly be.

Harkoos

Stick or leather, 'tis all one to Harkoos. I will not be cudgelled out of
my straight road to Paradise.

Ameena

My mind misgives me.

(enters the room)

Was this well done, my child ?

Nureddene

Dear, think the chiding given; do not pain
Your forehead with a frown.

Ameena

You, Doonya, too
Were part of this ?

Doonya

Part ! you shall not abate
My glory; I am its artificer,
The auxiliary and supplement of Fate.

Ameena

Quite shameless in your disobedience, Doonya ?
Your father's anger will embrace us all.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Nureddene

And nothing worse than the embrace which ends
A chiding and a smile, our fault deserves.
You had a gift for me in your sweet hands
Concealed behind you; I have but reached round
And taken it ere you knew.

Ameena

For you, my son ?
She was not for you, she was for the King.
This was your worst fault, child; all others venial
Beside it.

Nureddene

For the King ! You told me, Doonya,
That she was bought for me, a kind surprise
Intended ?

Doonya

I did, exact !

Ameena

Such falsehood, Doonya !

Doonya

No falsehood, none. Purchased she was for him,
For he has got her. And surprise ! Well, mother,
Are you not quite surprised ? And uncle will be
Most woefully. My cousin and Anice too
Are both caught napping,—all except great Doonya.
No falsehood, mere excess of truth, a bold
Anticipation of the future, mother.

Nureddene

I did not know of this. Yet blame not Doonya;
For had I known, I would have run with haste
More breathless to demand my own from Fate.

Ameena

What will your father think ? I am afraid.
He was most urgent; grave beyond his wont.
Absent yourself awhile and let me bear
The first keen breathing of his anger.

Nureddene

The King !

And if he were the Caliph of the world,
He should not have my love. Come, fellow-culprit.

Exit with Doonya

Ameena

Harkoos, go fetch your master here; and stiffen
The muscles of your back. Negligent servant !

Harkoos

'Tis all one to Harkoos. Stick or leather ! leather or stick ! 'Tis the
way of this wicked and weary world.

Exit

Ameena

Yet, Anice, tell me, is't too late ? Alas !
Your cheeks and lowered eyes confess the fault.
I fear your nature and your nurture, child,

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Are not so beautiful as is your face.
Could you not have forbidden this ?

Anice-aljalice

Lady,
Remember my condition. Can a slave
Forbid or order ? We are only trained
To meek and quick obedience; and what's virtue
In freemen is in us a deep offence.
Do you command your passions, not on us
Impose that service; 'tis not in our part.

Ameena

You have a clever brain and a quick tongue.
And yet this speech was hardly like a slave's !
I will not blame you.

Anice-aljalice

I deny not, lady,
My heart consented to this fault.

Ameena

I know
Who 'twas besieged you, girl, and do not blame
Your heart for yielding where it had no choice.
Go in.

Exit Anice. Enter Harkoos and Ibn Sawy

Ibn Sawy

I hope, I hope that has not chanced
Which I have striven to prevent. This slave
Grins only and mutters gibberish to my questions.

Ameena

The worst.

Ibn Sawy

Why so ! the folly was my own
And I must bear its heavy consequence.
Sir, you shall have your wage for what has happened.

Harkoos

The way of the world. Whose peg's loose ? Beat Harkoos. Because my young master would climb through the wrong window and mistake a rope-ladder for the staircase, my back must ache. Was the window-sill my post ? Have I wings to stand upon air or a Djinn's eye to see through wood ? How bitter is injustice !

Ibn Sawy

You shall be thrashed for your poor gift of lying.

Ameena

Blame none ; it was unalterable fate.

Ibn Sawy

That name by which we put our sins on God,
Yet shall not so escape. 'Twas our indulgence
Moulded the boy and made him fit for sin ;
Which now, by our past mildness hampered quite,
We cannot punish without tyranny.
Offences we have winked at, when they knocked
At foreign doors, how shall we look at close
When they come striking home ?

Ameena

What will you do ?

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Ibn Sawy

The offence here merits death, but not the offender.
Easy solution if the sin could die
And leave the sinner living !

Ameena

Vizier, you are perplexed, to talk like this
Because a little's broken, break not more.
Let Nureddene have Anice-aljalice,
As Fate intended. Buy another slave
Fairer than she is for great Alzayni's bed,
Return his money to the treasury
And cover up this fault.

Ibn Sawy

With lies ?

Ameena

With silence.

Ibn Sawy

Will God be silent ? Will my enemies ?
The son of Khakan silent ? Ameena,
My children have conspired my shame and death.

Ameena

Face not the thing so mournfully. Vizier, you want
A woman's wit beside you in the Court.
Muene may speak ; will you be dumb ? Whom then
Will the King trust ? Collect your wits, be bold,
Be subtle ; guard yourself, protect your child.

Ibn Sawy

You urge me on a road my weaker heart
Chooses, not reason. But consider, dame,
If we excuse such gross and violent fault
Done in our house, what hope to save our boy,—
Oh, not his body, but the soul within ?
'Twill petrify in vice and grow encrusted
With evil as with a leprosy.

Ameena

Do this.
Show a fierce anger, have a gleaming knife
Close at his throat, let him be terrified.
Then I'll come in with tears and seem to save him
On pledge of fairer conduct.

Ibn Sawy

This has a promise.
Give me a knife and let me try to frame
My looks to anger.

Ameena

Harkoos, a dagger here !

Harkoos gives his dagger

Ibn Sawy

But see, you come not in too early anxious
And mar the game.

Ameena

Trust me.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Ibn Sawy

Go, call my son,
Harkoos ; let him not know that I am here.

Exit Harkoos

Go, Ameena.

Exit Ameena

Plays oft have serious fruit,
'Tis seen ; then why not this ? 'tis worth the trial.
Prosper or fail, I must do something quickly
Before I go upon the Caliph's work
To Roun the mighty. But I hear him come.

Enter Nureddene and Harkoos

Nureddene

You're sure of it ? You shall have gold for this
Kind treason.

Harkoos

Trust Harkoos ; and if he beats me,
Why, sticks are sticks and leather is but leather.

Nureddene

Father !

Ibn Sawy

O rascal, traitor, villain, imp !

*He throws him down on a couch and
holds him under his dagger*

I'll father you. Prepare, prepare your soul,
Your black and crime-encrusted soul for hell.
I'm death and not your father.

Nureddene

Mother, quick !

Help, mother !

Ameena comes hurrying in

The poor dear old man is mad.

Ibn Sawy

Ah, woman ! Wherefore do you come so soon ?

Nureddene

How his eyes roll ! Satan, abandon him.
Take him off quickly.

Ibn Sawy

Take me off, you villain ?

Nureddene

Tickle him in the ribs, that's the best way.

Ibn Sawy

Tickle me in the ribs ! Impudent villain !
I'll cut your throat.

Ameena

(frightened)

Husband, what do you ? think,

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

He is your only son.

Ibn Sawy

And preferable
I had not him. Better no son than bad ones.

Nureddene

Is there no help then ?

Ibn Sawy

None; prepare !

Nureddene

But let me lie a little easier first. All right.

Ibn Sawy

Lie easier ! Rogue, your impudence amazes.
You shall lie easier soon on coals of hell.

Ameena

This goes no farther.

Amice-aljalice

(looking in)

They are in angry talk.
Oh, kill me rather !

Nureddene

Waste not your terrors, sweet heart.
We are rehearsing an old comedy,

"The tyrant father and his graceless son".
Foolish old man !

Ibn Sawy

What ! What !

Nureddene

See now the end
Of all your headstrong moods and wicked rages
You would indulge yourself in, though I warned you,
Against your gallant handsome virtuous son.
And now they have turned your brain ! Vicious indulgence,
How bitter-dusty is thy fruit ! Be warned
And put a rein on anger, curb in wrath,
That enemy of man. Oh, thou art grown
A sad example to all angry fathers !

Ibn Sawy

Someone had told you of this. (*To Harkoos*) Grinning villain !

Harkoos

Oh yes, it is I, of course. Your peg's loose; beat Harkocs.

Ibn Sawy

My peg, you rogue ! I'll loose your peg for you.

Nureddene

No, father, let him be, and hear me out.
I swear it was not out of light contempt
For your high dignity and valued life
More precious to me than my blood, if I
Transgressed your will in this. I knew not of it,

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Nor that you meant my Anice for the King.
For me I thought her purchased, so was told,
And still believe religiously that Fate
Brought her to Bassora only for me.

Ibn Sawy

It was a fault, my child.

Nureddene

Which I cannot repent.

Ibn Sawy

You are my son, generous and true and bold
Though faulty. Take the slave girl then, but swear
Never hereafter mistress, slave or wife
Lies in your arms but only she; neither,
Until herself desire it, mayst thou sell her.
Swear this and keep thy love.

Nureddene

I swear it.

Ibn Sawy

Leave us.

Exit Nureddene

Anice, in care for thee I have required
This oath from him, which he, perhaps will keep.
Do thou requite it; be to him no less
Than a dear wife.

Anice-aljalice

How noble is the nature
That prompts you to enforce on great offenders
Their dearest wishes !

Ibn Sawy

Go in, my child, go, Anice.

Exit Anice

Last night of my departure hence to Roum
To parley with the Greek for great Haroon,
I spoke with you, and my long year of absence,—

Ameena

It is a weary time.

Ibn Sawy

Wherein much evil
May chance; and therefore will I leave my children
As safe as God permits. Doonya to nuptials.
The son of Khakan wants her for his cub,
But shall not have her. One shall marry her
Who has the heart and hand to guard her well.

Ameena

Who, husband ?

Ibn Sawy

Murad, Captain of the City.
He rises daily in Alzayni's favour.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Ameena

He is a Turk. Our noble Arab branch
Were ill engrafted on that savage stock.

Ibn Sawy

A prejudice. There is no stock in Islam
Except the Prophet. For our Nureddene,
I will divide my riches in two halves,
Leave one to him and one for you with Murad,
While you are with your kin or seem to be.

Ameena

Oh wherefore this ?

Ibn Sawy

'Tis likely that the boy,
Left here in sole command, will waste his wealth
And come to evil. If he's sober, well;
If not, when he is bare as any rock,
Abandoned by his friends, spewed out by all,
It may be that in this sharp school and beaten
With savage scourges the wild blood in him
May learn sobriety and noble use :
Then rescue him, assist his better nature.
And we shall see too how the loves endure
Betwixt him and the Persian; whether she
Deserves her monarchy in his wild will,
Or, even deserving, keeps it.

Ameena

But, dear husband,
Shall I not see my boy for a whole year ?

Ibn Sawy

No tears ! Consider it the punishment
Of our too fond indulgent love,—happy
If that be worst. All will end well, I hope,
And I returning, glad, to Bassora
Embrace a son reformed, a happy niece
Nursing her babe, and you, the gentle mother,
Like the sweet kindly earth whose patient love
Embraces even our faults and sins. Grant it
O Allah, if it be at all Thy will.

Exeunt

SCENE 4

A room in Ajebe's house

Ajebe

Balkis, do come, my heart.

Enter Balkis

Balkis

Your will ?

Ajebe

My will !

When had I any will since you came here,
You rigorous tyrant ?

Balkis

Was it for abuse
You called me ?

Ajebe

Bring your lute and sing to me.

Balkis

I am not in the mood.

Ajebe

Sing, I entreat you.
I am hungry for your voice of pure delight.

Balkis

I am no kabob, nor my voice a curry.
Hungry, forsooth !

Exit

Ajebe

Oh, Balkis, Balkis ! hear me.

Enter Mymoona

Mymoona

It's useless calling; she is in her moods.
And there's your Vizier getting down from horse
In the doorway.

Ajebe

I will go and bring him up.
Mymoona, coax her for me, will you, girl ?

Exit

Mymoona

It is as good to meet a mangy dog
As this same uncle of ours. He seldom comes.

She conceals herself behind a curtain

Re-enter Ajebe with Almuene

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Almuene

He goes tomorrow ? Well. And Nureddene
The scapegrace holds his wealth in hand ? Much better.
I always said he was a fool. (*To himself*) Easily
I might confound him with this flagrant lapse
About the slavegirl. But wait ! wait ! He gone,
His memory waned, his riches squandered quite,
I'll ruin his son, ruin the insolent Turk
He has preferred to my Fareed. His Doonya
And Anice slavegirls to my lusty boy,
His wife—but she escapes. It is enough
They come back to a desolate house. Oh ! let
Their forlorn wrinkles hug an empty nest
In life's cold leafless winter ! Meanwhile I set
My seal on every room in the King's heart;
He finds no chamber open when he comes.

Ajebe

Uncle, you ponder things of weight ?

Almuene

Trifles, mere trifles. You're a friend, I think,
Of Ibn Sawy's son ?
No, Ajebe;

Ajebe

We drink together.

Almuene

Right, right ! Would you have place, power, honours, gold,
Or is your narrow soul content with ease ?

Ajebe

Why, uncle

Almuene

Do you dread death ? furious disgrace ?
Or beggary that's worse than either ? Do you ?

Ajebe

All men desire those blessings, fear these ills.

Almuene

They shall be yours in overflowing measure,
Good, if you serve me, ill, if you refuse.

Ajebe

What service ?

Almuene

Ruin wanton Nureddene.
Gorge him with riot and excess; rob him
Under a friendly guise; force him to spend
Till he's a beggar. Most, delude him on
To prone extremity of drunken shame
Which he shall feel, yet have no power to check.
Drench all his senses in vile profligacy,
Not mere light gallantries, but gutter filth,
Though you have to share it. Do this and you're made;
But this undone, you are yourself undone.
Eight months I give you. No, attend me not.

Exit

Ajebe

Mymooná ! girl, where are you ?

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Mymoona

Here, here, behind you.

Ajebe

A Satan out of hell has come to me.

Mymoona

A Satan, truly, and he'd make you one,
Damning you down into the deepest hell of all.

Ajebe

What shall I do ?

Mymoona

Not what he tells you to.

Ajebe

Yet if I do not, I am gone. No man
In Bassora could bear his heavy wrath
On the other side—

Mymoona

Leave the other side. 'Tis true,
The dog will keep his word in evil; for good,
'Tis brittle, brittle. But you cannot do it;
Our Balkis loves his Anice so completely.

Ajebe

Girl, girl, my life and goods are on the die.

Mymoona

Do one thing.

Ajebe

I will do what you shall bid me.

Mymoona

He has some vile companions, has he not ?

Ajebe

Cafoor and Ayoob and the rest; a gang
of pleasant roisterers without heart or mind.

Mymoona

Whisper the thing to them; yourself do nothing.
Check him at times. Whatever else you do,
Take not his gifts; they are the price of shame.
If he is ruined, as without their urging
Is likely, Satan's satisfied, if not,
We'll flee from Bassora when there's no help.

Ajebe

You have a brain. Yet if I must be vile,
A bolder vileness best becomes a man.

Mymoona

And Balkis ?

Ajebe

True.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Mymoona

Be safe, be safe. The rest
Is doubtful, but one truth is sadly sure,
That dead men cannot love.

Ajebe

I'll think of it.
Mymoona, leave me; send your sister here.

Exit Mymoona

The thing's too vile ! and yet—honours and place,
And to set Balkis on a kingdom's crest
Breaking and making men with her small hands
The lute's too large for ! But the way is foul.

Enter Balkis

Balkis

What's your command ?

Ajebe

Bring me your lute and sing.
I'm sad and troubled. Cross me not, my girl,
My temper's wry.

Balkis

Oh, threats ?

Ajebe

Remember still
You are a slave, however by my love
Pampered, and sometimes think upon the scourge.

Balkis

Do, do ! yes, beat me ! Or why beat me only ?
Kill me, as you have killed my heart already
With your harsh words. I knew, I knew what all
Your love would end in. Oh ! oh ! oh ! (*Weeps*)

Ajebe

Forgive me,
O sweetest heart. I swear I did not mean it.

Balkis

Because in play I sometimes speak a little—
O scourge me, kill me !

Ajebe

'Twas a jest, a jest !
Tear not my heart with sobs. Look, Balkis, love,
You shall have necklaces worth many thousands,
Pearls, rubies, if you only will not weep.

Balkis

I am a slave and only fit for scourging,
Not pearls and rubies. Mymoona ! Oh, Mymoona !
Bring him a scourge and me a cup of poison.

Exit

Ajebe

She plays upon me as upon her lute,
I'm as inert, as helpless, as completely
Ruled by her moods, as dumbly pleasureless
By her light hands untouched. How to appease her ?
Mymoona ! oh, Mymoona !

Exit

ACT III

SCENE I

Bassora

Ibn Sawy's house

A room in the outer apartments decorated for a banquet

Doonya, Anice-aljalice, Balkis

Doonya

Lord, how they pillage ! Even the furniture
Cannot escape these Djinns. Ogre Ghaneem
Picks up that costly chain between his teeth
And off to his castle; devil Ayoob drops
That table of mosaic in his pocket;
Zeb sweeps off rugs and couches in a whirlwind.
What purse will long put up with such ill-treatment ?

Balkis

It must be checked.

Doonya

'Tis much that he has kept
His promise to my uncle. Oh, he's sound !
These villains spoil him. Anice, you are to blame.
However you complain, yourself are quite
As reckless.

Anice-aljalice

I ?

Doonya

Yes, you. Is there a bright
Unnecessary jewel you have seen
And have not bought ? a dress that took your fancy
And was not in a moment yours ? Or have you lost
A tiny chance of laughter, song and wine,
Since you were with him ?

Anice-aljalice

A few rings and chains,
Some silks and cottons I have bought at times.

Doonya

What did these trifles cost ?

Anice-aljalice

I do not know.

Doonya

Of course you do not. Come, it's gone too far;
Restrain him, curb yourself.

Balkis

Next time he calls you
To sing among his wild companions, send
Cold answers, do not go.

Anice-aljalice

To break the jest,
The flow of good companionship, drive out

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Sweet friendly looks with anger, be a kill-joy
And frowner in this bright and merry world !
Oh, all the sins that human brows grow wrinkled
With frowning at, could never equal this !

Doonya

But if the skies grew darker ?

Anice-aljalice

If they should !

It was a bright and merry world. To see him
Happy and gay and kind was all I cared for,
There my horizon stopped. But if the skies
Did darken ! Doonya, it shall cease today.

Enter Azeem

Well, Azeem.

Azeem

Madam, half the creditors,
And that means half the shops in Bassora,
Hold session in the outer hall and swear
It shall be permanent till they get money.

Anice-aljalice

**Where is your master ? Call him here. A moment !
Have you the bills ?**

Azeem

All of them, long as pillars
And crammed from head to foot with monstrous sums.

Anice-aljalice

Call him.

Azeem

He's here.

Enter Nureddene

Nureddene

What, cousin Doonya ! Balkis !
Did you steal down to see the decorations ?
Are they not pretty ?

Doonya

Like a painted tombstone
Sculptured and arabesqued, but death's inside
And bones, my brother, bones.

Nureddene

And there are bones
In this fair pleasing outside called dear Doonya,
But let us only think of rosy cheeks,
Sweet eyes and laughing lips and not the bones.

Doonya

You have boned my metaphor and quite disboned it,
Until there's nothing firm inside; 'tis pulpy.

Anice-aljalice

The creditors besiege you, Nureddene;
You'll pay them.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Nureddene

Serious, Anice ?

Anice-aljalice

I will not smile again. Azeem, the bills !
Till you do,

Nureddene

Is this your doing, Doonya ?

Doonya

Yours, cousin, yours.

Nureddene

Is't so ? Anice ?

Anice-aljalice

I've told you.

Nureddene

Go in, you three.
Show me the bills.

Anice-aljalice

Ah, he is grieved and angry !
His eyes are clouded; let me speak to him.

Balkis

Now you'll spoil all; drag her off, Doonya.

Doonya

Come.

Exit drawing away Anice, Balkis behind

Nureddene

Well, Sir, where are these bills ?

Azeem

You will see the bills ?

Nureddene

The sums, the sums !

Azeem

To tailor Mardouc twenty-four thousand pieces, namely for caftans, robes, shawls, turbans, Damascus silks,—

Nureddene

Leave the inventory.

Azeem

To tailor Labkan another twenty-thousand ; to the baker two thousand ; to the confectioner as much ; to the Bagdad curio-merchant twenty-four thousand ; to the same from Ispahan, sixteen-thousand ; to the jeweller on account of necklaces, bracelets, waist-ornaments, anklets, rings, pendants and all manner of trinkets for the slavegirl Anice-aljalice, ninety thousand only ; to the upholsterer—

Nureddene

Hold, hold ! why, what are all these monstrous sums ?
Hast thou no word but thousands in thy belly,
Exorbitant fellow ?

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Azeem

Why, sir, 'tis in the bills ; my belly's empty enough.

Nureddene

Nothing but thousands !

Azeem

Here's one for seven hundred, twelve dirhams and some odd fractions from Husayn cook.

Nureddene

The sordid, dingy rogue ! Will he dun me so brutally for a base seven hundred ?

Azeem

The fruiterer—

Nureddene

Away ! bring bags.

Azeem

Bags, sir ?

Nureddene

Of money, fool. Call Harkoos and all the slaves. Bring half my treasury.

Exit Azeem

She frown on me ! look cold ! for sums, for debts !
For money, the poor paltry stuff we dig

By shovels from base mire. Grows love so beggarly
That it must think of piastres ? O my heart !

*Enter Azeem, Harkoos and slaves with
bags of money*

Heap them about the room—Go, Azeem, call
That hungry pack ; they shall be fed.

Exit Azeem

Harkoos,
Open two bags there. Have you broken the seals ?

Enter Azeem ushering in the creditors

Who asks for money ?

Cook

I, Sir, seven hundred denars, twelve dirhams and three fourth of a dirham,
that is my amount.

Nureddene

Take thy amount, thou dingy-hearted rogue.

Throws a bag towards him

You there, take yours.

Jeweller

Sir, this is not a hundredth part of your debt to me.

Nureddene

Give him two hundred bags.

Harkoos

Bags, sir ?

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Nureddene

Do you grin, rogue, and loiter ? Take that !

Strikes him

Harkoos

Exactly. Your peg's loose, beat Harkoos. Old master or young, 'tis all one to Harkoos. Stick or leather ! cuff or kick ! these are all the houses of my horoscope.

Nureddene

I am sorry I struck thee ; there's gold. Give them all the money ; all, I say. Porter that home, you rascals, and count your sums. What's over, cram your throats with it ; or, if you will, throw it in the gutter.

Creditors

(scrambling and quarrelling for the bags)

That's mine ! that's mine ! no, mine ! Leave go, you robber. Whom do you call robber, thief ?

Nureddene

Cudgel them from the room.

*Exeunt creditors snatching bags and
pursued by the slaves*

Azeem

'Tis madness, sir.

Nureddene motions him away. Exit Azeem

Nureddene

If she were clothed in rags
And beggary her price, I'd follow her

Enter Anice

Nureddene, what have you done ?

You bade me pay the fellows : I have paid them.

You are angry with me ? I did not think you could
Be angry with me for so slight a cause.

I did not think that you could frown on me
For money, for a matter of money !

You

Believe that ? Is it so you know me ? Dear,
While for my sake you ruined yourself, must I
Look smiling on ? Nay, ruin then yourself
And try me.

Dear Anice, it was with myself
I was angry, but the coward in me turned
On you to avenge its pain. Let me forget
All else and only think of you and love.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Anice-aljalice

Shall I sing to you ?

Nureddene

Do, Anice.

Anice-aljalice

There's a song-

Song

Love keep terms with tears and sorrow ?
He's too bright.
Born today, he may tomorrow
Say good night.

Love is gone ere grief can find him;
But his way
Tears that falling lag behind him
Still betray.

I cannot sing.

Nureddene

Tears, Anice ? O my love,
What worst calamity do they portend
For him who caused them ?

Anice-aljalice

None, none, or only showers
The sunlight soon o'ertakes. Away with grief !
What is it after all but money lost ?
Beggars are happier, are they not, my lord ?

Nureddene

Much happier, Anice.

Anice-aljalice

Let us be beggars, then.
Oh, we shall wander blissfully about
In careless rags. And I shall take my lute
And buy you honey-crusts with my sweet voice.
For is not my voice sweet, my master ?

Nureddene

Sweet
As Gabriel's when he sings before the Lord
And Heaven listens.

Anice-aljalice

We shall reach Bagdad
Some day and meet the Caliph in the streets,
The mighty Caliph Haroun-al-Rasheed,
Disguised, a beggar too, give him our crusts
And find ourselves all suddenly the friends
Of the world's master. Shall we not, my lord ?

Nureddene

Anice, we shall.

Anice-aljalice

Let us be beggars then,
Rich, happy paupers singing through the world.
Oh, but you have a father and a mother !
Come, sit down there and I will stand before you
And tell a story.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Nureddene

Sit by me and tell it.

Anice-aljalice

No, no, I'll stand.

Nureddene

Well, wilful. Now, your tale.

Anice-aljalice

I have forgotten it. It was about
A man who had a gem earth could not buy.

Nureddene

As I have you.

Anice-aljalice

Be silent, sir. He kept it
With ordinary jewels which he took
Each day and threw into the street, and said,
"I'll show this earth that all the gems it has,
Together match not this I'll solely keep."

Nureddene

As I'll keep you.

Anice-aljalice

Ah, but he did not know
What slender thread bound to a common pearl
That wonder. When he threw that out, alas !

His jewel followed, and though he sought earth through,
He never could again get back his gem.

Nureddene

(after a pause)

Tomorrow I will stop this empty life,
Cut down expense and only live for you.
Tonight there is the banquet. It must stand,
My word being given. Azeem !

Enter Azeem

What money still
Is in the treasury ? What debts outstand ?

Azeem

More now than you can meet. But for today's folly, all would have been
well,—your lordly folly ! Oh, beat me ! I must speak.

Nureddene

Realize all the estate, the house only excepted; satisfy the creditors.
For what's left, entreat delay.

Azeem

They will not be entreated. They have smelt the carrion and are all
winging up, beak outstretched and talons ready.

Nureddene

Carrion indeed and vile ! Wherefore gave God
Reason to his best creatures, if they suffer
The rebel blood to o'ercrow that tranquil, wise

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

And perfect minister ? Do what thou canst.
I have good friends to help me in my need.

Exit

Azeem

Good friends ? good bloodsuckers, good thieves ! Much help his need
will have out of them !

Anice-aljalice

There's always Ajebe.

Azeem

Will you trust him ? He is the Vizier's nephew.

Exeunt

SCENE 2

The same

Anice-aljalice, Nureddene

Anice-aljalice

And they all left ?

Nureddene

Cafoor crept down and heard
The clamorous creditors ; and they all left.
Ghaneem's dear mother's sick ; for my sweet love
Only he came, leaving her sad bedside ;
Friend Ayoob's uncle leaves today for Mecca :
In Cafoor's house there is a burial toward ;
Zeb's father, Omar's brother, Hussan's wife
Are piteously struck down. There never was
So sudden an epidemic witnessed yet
In Bassora, and all with various ailments.

Anice-aljalice

This is their friendship !

Nureddene

We will not judge so harshly.
It may be that a generous kindly shame
Or half-remorseful delicacy had pricked them.
I've sent Harkoos to each of them in turn
For loans to help me. We shall see. Who's here ?

Enter Ajebe

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Ajebe, you have come back, you only ? Yes,
You were my friend and checked me always. Man
Is not ignoble, but has angel soarings,
Howe'er the nether devil plucks him down.
Still we have souls nor is the mould quite broken
Of that original and faultless plan
Which Adam spoilt.

Ajebe

I am your ruin's author.
If you have still a sword, use it upon me.

Nureddene

What's this ?

Ajebe

Incited by the Vizier, promised
Greatness, I in my turn incited these
To hurry you to ruin. Will you slay me ?

Nureddene

(after a silence)

Return and tell the Vizier that work's done.
Be great with him.

Ajebe

Are you entirely ruined ?

Nureddene

Doubt not your work's well done ; you can assure
The uncle. Came you back for that ?

Ajebe

If all I have,—

Nureddene

No more ! return alive.

Ajebe

You punish home.

Exit

Nureddene

The eunuch lingers.

Enter Harkoos

Well, sir, your success ?

Harkoos

I went first to Ayocb. He has had losses, very suddenly, and is dolorous that he cannot help you.

Nureddene

Ghaneem ?

Harkoos

Has broken his leg for the present and cannot see any one for a long fortnight.

Nureddene

Cafoor ?

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Harkoos

Has gone into the country—upstairs.

Nureddene

Zeb ?

Harkoos

Wept sobbingly. Every time I mentioned money, he drowned the subject in tears. I might have reached his purse at last but I cannot swim.

Nureddene

Omar ?

Harkoos

Will burn his books sooner than lend you money.

Nureddene

Did all fail me ?

Harkoos

Some had dry eyes and some wet, but none a purse.

Nureddene

Go.

Exit Harkoos

What next ? Shall I, like him of Athens, change
And hate my kind ? Then should I hate myself,
Who ne'er had known their faults, if my own sins
Pursued me not like most unnatural hounds

Into their screened and evil parts of nature.
God made them; what He made, is doubtless good.

Anice-aljalice

You still have me.

Nureddene

That's much.

Anice-aljalice

No, everything.

Nureddene

'Tis true, and I shall feel it soon.

Anice-aljalice

My jewels
And dresses will fill up quite half the void.

Nureddene

Shall I take back my gifts ?

Anice-aljalice

If they are mine,
I choose to sell them.

Nureddene

Do it, I forgot;
Let Cafoor have the vase I promised him.
Come, Anice. I will ask Murad for help.

Exeunt

SCENE 3

A room in Ajebe's house

Balkis, Mymoona

Balkis

Did he not ask after me ? I'm sick, Mymoona.

Mymoona

Sick ? I think both of you are dying of a galloping consumption. Such colour in the cheeks was never a good symptom.

Balkis

Tell him I am very, very ill, tell him I am dying. Pray be pathetic.

Mymoona

Put saffron on your cheeks and look nicely yellow; he will melt.

Balkis

I think my heart will break.

Mymoona

Let it do so quickly; it will mend the sooner.

Balkis

(in tears)

How can you be so harsh to me, Mymoona ?

Mymoona

You foolish child ! Why did you strain your power
To such a breaking tightness ? There's a rhythm
Will shatter hardest stone; each thing in nature
Has its own point where it has done with patience
And starts in pieces; below that point play on it,
Nor overpitch the music. Look, he is coming.

Balkis

I'll go.

Mymoona

(holding her)

You shall not.

Enter Ajebe

Ajebe

I thought you were alone,
Mymoona. I am not cheap to thrust myself
Where I'm not wanted.

Balkis

I would be gone, Mymoona.
In truth, I thought it was the barber's woman;
Therefore I stayed.

Ajebe

There are such hearts, Mymoona,
As think so little of adoring love,
They make it only a pedestal for pride,
A whipping-stock for their vain tyrannies.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Balkis

Mymoona, there are men so weak in love,
They cannot bear more than an ass's load;
So high in their conceit, the tenderest
Kindest rebuke turns all their sweetness sour.

Ajebe

Some have strange ways of tenderness, Mymoona.

Balkis

Mymoona, some think all control a tyranny.

Mymoona

O you two children ! Come, an end of this !
Give me your hand.

Ajebe

My hand ? Wherefore my hand ?

Mymoona

Give it. I join two hands that much desire
And would have met ere this but for their owners,
Who have less sense than they.

Balkis

She's stronger than me,
Or I'd not touch you.

Ajebe

I would not hurt Mymoona;
Therefore I take your hand.

Mymoona

Oh, is it so ?
Then by your foolish necks ! Make your arms meet
About her waist.

Ajebe

Only to satisfy you,
Whom only I care for.

Mymoona

Yours here on his neck.

Balkis

I was about to yawn, therefore, I raised them.

Mymoona

I go to fetch a cane. Look that I find you
Much better friends. If you will not agree,
Your bones at least shall sympathise and ruefully.

Exit

Ajebe

How could you be so harsh to my great love ?

Balkis

How could you be so cruel and so wicked ?

Ajebe

I kiss you, but 'tis only your red lips
So soft, not you who are more hard than stone.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNAL

Balkis

I kiss you back, but only 'tis because
I hate to be in debt.

Ajebe

Will you be kinder ?

Balkis

Will you be more obedient and renounce
Your hateful uncle ?

Ajebe

Him and all his works,
If you will only smile on me.

Balkis

I'll laugh
Like any horse. No, I surrender. Clasp me,
I am your slave.

Ajebe

My queen of love.

Balkis

Both, both.

Ajebe

Why were you so long froward ?

Balkis

Do you remember
I had to woo you in the market ? how you
Hesitated a moment ?

Ajebe

Vindictive shrew !

Balkis

This time had I not reason to be angry ?

Ajebe

Oh, too much reason ! I feel so vile until
I find a means to wash this uncle stain from me.

Enter Mymoona

Mymoona

That's well. But we must now to Nureddene's.
For hard pressed as he is, he'll sell his Anice.

Balkis

Never !

Mymoona

He must.

Ajebe

I'll lend him thrice her value.

Mymoona

Do not propose it. The wound you gave's too recent.

Balkis

Then let me keep her as a dear deposit,
The sweet security of Ajebe's loan,
Till he redeems her.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Mymoona

He will take no favours
No, let him sell her in the open market;
Ajebe will overtop all bids. Till he
Get means, she's safe with us and waiting for him.

Balkis

Oh, let us go at once.

Mymoona

I'll order letters.

Exit

Ajebe

Will you be like this always ?

Balkis

If you are good,
I will be. If not, I will outshrew Xantippe.

Ajebe

With such a heaven and hell in view, I'll be
An angel.

Balkis

Of what colour ?

Ajebe

Black beside you,
But fair as seraphs to what I have been.

Exeunt

SCENE 4

Ibn Sawy's house

Anice, alone

Anice-aljalice

If Murad fails him, what is left ? He has
No other thing to sell but only me.
A thought of horror ! Is my love then strong
Only for joy, only to share his heaven ?
Can it not enter Hell for his dear sake ?
How shall I follow him then after death,
If Heaven reject him ? For the path's so narrow
Footing that judgment blade, to slip's so easy.
Avert the need, O Heaven.

Enter Nureddene

Has Murad failed him ?

Nureddene

Murad refuses. This load of debt's a torture !

Anice-aljalice

The dresses and the gems you made me keep—

Nureddene

Keep them; they are your own.

Anice-aljalice

I am your slavegirl.
My body and what it wears, all I am, all I have,
Are only for your use.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Nureddene

Girl, would you have me strip you then quite bare ? •
•

Anice-aljalice

What does it matter ? The coarsest rag ten dirhams
Might buy, would be enough, if you'd still love me.

Nureddene

These would not meet one half of what I owe.

Anice-aljalice

Master, you bought me for ten thousand pieces.

Nureddene

Be silent.

Anice-aljalice

Has my value lessened since?

Nureddene

No more ! You'll make me hate you.

Anice-aljalice

If you do,

'Tis better, it will help my heart to break.

Nureddene

Have you the heart to speak of this ?

Anice-aljalice

Had I
Less heart, less love, I would not speak of it.

Nureddene

I swore to my father that I would not sell you.

Anice-aljalice

But there was a condition.

Nureddene

If you desired it !

Anice-aljalice

Do I not ask you ?

Nureddene

Speak truth ! Do you desire it ?
Truth, in the name of God who sees your heart !
Oh, you are silent.

Anice-aljalice

^A
(weeping)

How could I desire it ?
Ajebe is here. Be friends with him, dear love;
Forgive his fault.

Nureddene

Anice, my own sins are
So heavy, not to forgive his lesser vileness
Would leave me without hope of heavenly pardon.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Anice-aljalice

I'll call him then.

Exit

Nureddene

Let me absolve these debts,
Then straight with Anice to Bagdad the splendid,
There is the home for hearts and brains and hands
Not in this petty centre. Core of Islam,
Bagdad, the flood to which all brooks converge.

Anice returns with Ajebe, Balkis, Mymoona

Ajebe

Am I forgiven ?

Nureddene

Ajebe, let the past
Have never been.

Ajebe

You are Ibn Sawy's son.

Nureddene

Give me your counsel, Ajebe. I have nothing
But the mere house which is not saleable.
My father must not find a homeless Bassora,
Returning.

Mymoona

Nothing else ?

Anice-aljalice

Only myself
Whom he'll not sell.

Mymoona

He must.

Nureddene

Never, Mymoona.

Mymoona

Fear not the sale which shall be in name alone.
'Tis only Balkis borrowing her from you,
Who pawns her value. She will stay with me
Serving our Balkis, safe from every storm,
But if you ask, why then the mart and auction ?
We must have public evidence of sale
To meet an uncle's questions.

Anice-aljalice

O now there's light.
Blessed Mymoona !

Nureddene

It must not be. My oath !

Anice-aljalice

But I desire it now, yes, I desire it.

Nureddene

And is my pride then nothing ? Shall I sell her
To be a slavegirl's slavegirl ? Pardon, Balkis.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Mymoona

Too fine, too fine !

Anice-aljalice

To serve awhile my sister !
For that she is in heart.

Balkis

Serve only in name.

Mymoona

She will be safe while you rebuild your fortunes.

Nureddene

I do not like it.

Mymoona

Nor does any one
As in itself, but only as a refuge
From greater evils.

Nureddene

Oh, you're wrong, Mymoona,
To quibble with an oath ! it will not prosper.
Straight dealing's best.

Mymoona

You look at it too finely.

Nureddene

Have it your way, then.

Mymoona

Call the broker here.

A quiet sale ! The uncle must not hear of it.

Ajebe

'Twould be the plague.

Nureddene

I fear it will not prosper.

Exeunt

SCENE 5

The slave-market

*Muazzim with Anice-aljalice exposed for sale
Ajebe, Aziz, Abdullah and Merchants*

Muazzim

Who bids ?

Aziz

Four thousand.

Muazzim

She went for ten when she was here first. Will you not raise your bid nearer her value ?

Aziz

She was new then and untouched. 'Tis the way with goods, broker ; they lose value by time and purchase, use and soiling.

Muazzim

Oh, sir, the kissed mouth has always honey. But this is a Peri and immortal lips have an immortal sweetness.

Ajebe

Five hundred to that bid.

Enter Almuene with slaves

Almuene

Ah, it is true ! All things come round at last
With the full wheel of Fate ; it is my hour.
Fareed shall have her. She shall be well handled
To plague her lover's heart before he dies.

(aloud)

Broker, who sells the girl and what's her rate ?

Ajebe

All's lost.

Muazzim

Nureddene bin Alfazzal bin Sawy sells her and your nephew has bid
for her four thousand and five hundred.

Almuene

My nephew bids for me. Who bids against ?

Ajebe

Uncle—

Almuene

Go, find out other slavegirls, Ajebe,
Do well until the end. *(Exit Ajebe)* Who bids against me ?
She's mine then. Come.

Anice-aljalice

I'll not be sold to you.

Almuene

What, dar'st thou speak, young harlot ? Fear the whip.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Anice-aljalice

Vizier, I fear you not ; there's law in Islam.
My master will deny the sale.

Almuene

Thy master
Shall be a kitchen negro, who shall use thee.

Anice-aljalice

Had I a whip, you should not say it twice.

Muazzim

Vizier, Vizier, by law the owner's acceptance only is final for the sale.

Almuene

It is a form, but get it. I am impatient
Until I have this strumpet in my grip.

Muazzim

Well, here he comes.

Enter Nureddene and Ajebe

A merchant

Shall we go, shall we go ?

Abdullah

Stand by ! 'Tis noble Ibn Sawy's son.
We must protect him even at our own peril.

Muazzim

She goes for a trifle, sir, and even that little you will not get. You will weary your feet with journeyings, only to be put off by his villains, and when you grow clamorous they will demand your order and tear it before your eyes. That's your payment.

Nureddene

That's nothing. The wolf's cub, hunchback Fareed !
The sale is off.

Muazzim

Be advised by me. Catch the girl by the hair and cuff her soundly, abusing her with the harshest terms your heart can consent to, then off with her quickly as if you had brought her to market only to execute an oath made in anger. So he loses his hold on her.

Nureddene

I'll tell the lie. One fine, pure seeming falsehood,
Admitted, opens door to all his naked
And leprous family ; in, in, they throng
And breed the house quite full.

Muazzim

The Vizier wants her.
He bids four thousand pieces and five hundred.

Nureddene

'Tis nothing. Girl, I keep my oath. Suffice it
You're bidden for and priced in open market here.
Come home ! Be now less dainty, meeker of tongue,
Or you shall have more feeling punishments.
Do I need to sell thee ? Home ! My oath is kept.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Almuene

This is a trick to cheat the law. Thou ruffian !
Cheap profligate ! What hast thou left to sell
But thy own sensual filth and drunken body,—
If any out of charity would spend
Some dirhams to reform thee with a scourge.
Vile son of a bland hypocrite !

He draws his scimitar

Abdullah

Pause, Vizier.

Aziz

Be patient, Nureddene.

Almuene

I yet shall kill him.
Hence, harlot, foot before me to my kitchen.

Anice-aljalice

He has abused me filthily, my lord,
Before these merchants.

Almuene

Abuse thee, rag ? Hast thou
An use ? To be abused is thy utility.
Thou shalt be used and common.

Nureddene

Stand by, you merchants; let none interfere
On peril of his life. Thou foul-mouthed tyrant,
Into the mire and dirt, where thou wert gendered !

Almuene

· Help, help ! Hew him in pieces.

The slaves are rushing forward

Abdullah

What do you, fellows ?

This is a Vizier and a Vizier's son.

Shall common men step in ? You'll get the blows

For only thanks.

Almuene

Oh ! Oh ! Will you then kill me ?

Nureddene

If thou wouldst live, crave pardon of the star

Thou hast spat on. I would make thee lick her feet

But that thy lips would foul their purity.

Almuene

Pardon, oh, pardon !

Nureddene

(throwing him away)

Live then, in thy gutter.

Exit with Anice

Abdullah

Go, slaves, lift up your master, lead him off.

Exeunt slaves with Almuene

SRI AURÔBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

He is well punished.

Aziz

What will come of this ?

Abdullah

No good to Nureddene. Let's go and warn him;
He's bold and proud, may think to face it out,
Which were mere waiting death.

Aziz

I pray on us

This falls not.

Exeunt Merchants

Nureddene

Here was ill-luck !

Ajebe

Nor ends with this.
I'll have a ship wide-sailed and well-provisioned
For their escape. Bassora will not hold them.

Exeunt

SCENE 6

The Palace at Bassora

Alzayni, Salar

Alzayni

So it is written here. Hot interchange
And high defiance have already passed
Between our Caliph and the daring Roman.
Europe and Asia are at grips once more.
To inspect the southward armies unawares
Haroun himself is coming.

Salar

Alfazzal then
Returns to us, unless the European,
After their barbarous fashion, seize on him.

Alzayni

'Tis strange, he sends no tidings of the motion
I made to Egypt.

Salar

'Tis too dangerous
To write of, as indeed 'twas ill-advised
To make the approach.

Alzayni

Great dangers justify
The smaller. Caliph Alrasheed conceives
On trifling counts a dumb displeasure towards me

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Which any day may speak; 'tis whispered of
In Bagdad. Alkhasib, the Egyptian Vizier,
Is in like plight. It is mere policy,
Salar, to build out of a common peril
A common safety.

Salar

Haroun al Rasheed
Could break each one of you between two fingers,
Stretching his left arm out to Bassora,
His right to Egypt. Sultan, wilt thou strive
Against the single giant of the world ?

Alzayni

Giants are mortal, friend, be but our swords
As bold as sharp. Call Murad here to me.

Exit Salar

My state is desperate, if Haroun lives;
He's sudden and deadly, when his anger bursts.
But let me be more sudden, yet more deadly.

Enter Murad

Murad, the time draws near. The Caliph comes
To Bassora; let him not thence return.

Murad

My blade is sharp and what I do is sudden.

Alzayni

My gallant Turk ! Thou shalt rise high, believe it.
For I need men like thee.

Murad

(to himself)

But Kings like thee

Earth needs not.

(Voice without)

Justice ! Justice ! Justice, King !
King of the Age, I am a man much wronged.

Alzayni

Who cries beneath my window ? Chamberlain !

Enter Sunjar

Sunjar

An Arab daubed with mud and dirt, all battered,
Unrecognizable, with broken lips cries out
For justice.

Alzayni

Bring him here.

Exit Sunjar

It is some brawl.

Enter Sunjar with Almuene

Thou, Vizier ! Who has done this thing to thee ?

Almuene

Mohamad, son of Sulyman ! Sultan
Alzayni ! Abbasside ! how shalt thou long

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Have friends, if the King's enemies may slay
In daylight, here, in open Bassora
The King's best friends because they love the King?

Alzayni

Name them at once and choose their punishment.

Almuene

Alfazzal's son, that brutal profligate,
Has done this.

Murad

Nureddene !

Alzayni

Upon what quarrel ?

Almuene

A year ago Alfazzal bought a slavegirl
With the King's money for the King, a gem
Of beauty, learning, mind, fit for a Caliph.
But seeing the open flower he thought perhaps
Your royal nose too base to smell at it,
So gave her to his royaller darling son
To soil and rumple. No man with a neck
Dared tell you of it, such your faith was in him.

Alzayni

Is't so ? our loved and trusted Ibn Sawy !

Almuene

This profligate squandering away his wealth
Brought her to market; there I saw her and bid

Her fair full price. Whereat he stormed at me
 With words unholy; yet I answered mild,
 "My son, not for myself, but the King's service
 I need her." He with bold and furious looks,
 "Dog, Vizier of a dog, I void on thee
 And on thy Sultan." With which blasphemy
 He seized me, rolled in the mire, battered with blows,
 Kicks, pullings of the beard, then dragged me back
 And flung me at his slavegirl's feet, who, proud
 Of her bold lover, footed my grey head
 Repeatedly and laughed, "This for thy King,
 Thy dingy stingy king who with so little
 Would buy a slavegirl sole in all the world".

Sunjar

Great Hasheem's vein cords all the Sultan's forehead.

Murad

The dog has murdered both of them with his.

Alzayni

Now by the Prophet, my forefather ! Out,
 Murad ! drag here the fellow and his girl,
 Trail them with ropes tied to their bleeding heels,
 Their faces in the mire, with pinioned hands
 Behind their backs, into my presence here.
 Sack Sawy's mansion, raze it to the ground.
 What, am I grown so bare that by-lane dogs
 Like these so loudly bay at me ? They die !

Murad

Sultan, —

Alzayni

He's doomed who speaks a word for them.

Exit

ŚRĪ AUROBINDO MANDĪR ANNŪĀĻ

Almuene

Brother-in-law Murad, fetch your handsome brother.
Soon, lest the Sultan hear of it !

Murad

Vizier,
I know my duty. Know your own and do it.

Almuene

I'll wash, then forth in holiday attire
To see that pretty sport.

Exit

Sunjar

What will you do ?

Murad

Sunjar, a something swift and desperate.
I will not let them die.

Sunjar

Run not on danger.
I'll send a runner hotfoot to their house
To warn them.

Exit Sunjar

Murad

Do so. What will Doonya say
When she hears this ? How will her laughing eyes
Be clouded and brim over ! Till Haroun comes !

Exit

SCENE 7

Ibn Sawy's house

Nureddene, Anice

Nureddene

'Tis Sunjar warns us, he who always loved
Our father.

Anice

Oh, my lord, make haste and flee.

Nureddene

Whither and how ? But come.

Enter Ajebe

Ajebe

Quick, Nureddene.

I have a ship all ready for Badgad,
Sails bellying with fair wind, the pilot's hand
Upon the wheel, the captain on the deck,
You only wanting. Flee then to Bagdad
And at the mighty Haroun's hand require
Justice upon these tyrants. Oh, delay not.

Nureddene

O friend ! But do me one more service, Ajebe.
Pay the few creditors unsatisfied;
My father will absolve me when he comes.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Ajebe

That's early done. And take my purse. No fumbling,
I will not be denied.

Nureddene

Bagdad ! (*laughing*) Why, Anice,
Our dream comes true; we hobnob with the Caliph !

Exeunt

ACT IV

Bagdad

SCENE I

The gardens of the Caliph's Palace outside the Pavilion of Pleasure

Anice, Nureddene

Anice-aljalice

This is Bagdad !

Nureddene

Bagdad the beautiful,
The city of delight. How green these gardens !
What a sweet clamour pipes among the trees.

Anice-aljalice

And flowers ! the flowers ! Look at these violets
Dark blue like burning sulphur ! Oh, rose and myrtle
And gilliflower and lavender; anemones
As red as blood ! All spring walks here in blossoms
And strews the pictured ground.

Nureddene

Do you see the fruit,
Anice ? Camphor and almond-apricots,
Green, white and purple figs and these huge grapes,
Round rubies or quite purple-black, that ramp
O'er wall and terrace; plums almost as smooth
As your own damask cheek. These balls of gold

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Are lemons, Anice, do you think ? Look, cherries,
And mid these fair pink-budded orange-blossoms
Rare glints of fruit.

Anice-aljalice

That was a blackbird whistled.
How the doves moan ! It's full of cooing turtles.
Oh see, the tawny bulbuls calling sweetly
And winging ! What a flutter of scarlet tails !
If it were dark, a thousand nightingales
Would surely sing together. How glad I am
That we were driven out of Bassora !

Nureddene

And this pavilion with its crowd of windows ?
Are there not quite a hundred ?

Anice-aljalice

Do you see
The candelabrum pendent from the ceiling ?
A blaze of gold !

Nureddene

Each window has a lamp.
Night in these gardens must be bright as day.
To find the master now ! Here we could rest
And ask our way to the great Caliph, Anice.

Enter Shaikh Ibrahim from behind

Ibrahim

So, so ! So, so ! Cavalier Servente with your bona roba ! You do not
know then of the Caliph's order forbidding entry into his gardens ?

No ? I will proclaim it then with a palmstick about your pretty back quarters. Will I not ? Hoh !

He advances stealthily with stick raised. Nureddene and Anice turn towards him, he drops the stick and remains with arm lifted.

Nureddene

Here is a Shaikh of the gardens. Whose garden is this, friend ?

Anice-aljalice

Is the poor man out of the use of his wits ? He stares open-mouthed.

Ibrahim

Glory to Allah who made you ! Glory to the angel who brought you down on earth ! Glory to myself who am permitted to look upon you ! I give glory to Allah for your beauty, O people of Paradise !

Nureddene

(smiling)

Rather give glory to Him because he has given thee a fine old age and this long silvery beard. But are we permitted in this garden ? The gate was not bolted.

Ibrahim

This garden ? My garden ? Yes, my son ; yes, my daughter. It is the fairer for your feet ; never before did such flowers bloom there.

Nureddene

What, is it thine ? And this pavilion ?

Ibrahim

All mine, my son. By the grace of Allah to a poor sinful old man. 'Tis by his election, my son, and divine ordination and sanctification, and a

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL.

little by the power of my prostrations and lustrations which I neglect not, neither morning nor noon nor evening nor at any of the intervals by the law commanded.

Nureddene

When did you buy or lay it out, old father ?

Ibrahim

A grand-aunt left it to me. Wonder not, for she was indeed aunt's grandmother to a cousin of the sister-in-law of the Caliph.

Nureddene

Oh then indeed ! She had the right divine to be wealthy. But I trust thou hast good doctrinal justification for inheriting after her ?

Ibrahim

I would not accept the Caliphate by any other. Oh my son, hanker not unlawfully after perishable earthly goods ; for, verily, they are a snare and verily, verily, they entrap the feet of the soul as it toileth over the straight rough road to Heaven.

Anice-aljalice

But, old father, are you rich and go so poorly robed ? Were I mistress of such a garden, I would float about it in damask and crimson and velvet ; silk and satin should be my meanest apparel.

Ibrahim

(aside)

She has a voice like a blackbird's ! O angel Gabriel, increase this unto me. I will not quarrel with thee though all Houridom break loose on my garden ; for their gates thou hast a little opened. *(aloud)* Fie, my daughter ! I take refuge with Allah. I am a poor sinful old man on the brink of the grave, what should I do with robes and coloured raiment. But they would hang well on thee. Praise the Lord who has given thee

hips like the moon and a waist indeed ! a small, seizable waist, Allah forgive me !

Anice-aljalice

We are weary, old father ; we hunger and thirst.

Ibrahim

Oh, my son ! Oh, my daughter ! You put me to shame. Come in, come in ; this my pavilion is yours and there is within it plenty of food and drink,—such innocent things now as sherbet and pure kind water. But as for wine, that accursèd thing, it is forbidden by the Prophet, whose name is a benediction. Come in, come in. Allah curse him that giveth not to the guest and the stranger.

Nureddene

It is indeed thine ? we may enter ?

Ibrahim

Allah, Allah ! its floor yearns for thy beauty and for the fair feet of thy sister. If there were youth now instead of poor venerable me, would one not kiss the marble wherever her fair small feet will touch it ? But I praise Allah that I am an old man with my thoughts turned to chastity and holiness.

Nureddene

Come, Anice.

Ibrahim

(walking behind them)

Allah ! Allah ! She is a gazelle that springeth. Allah ! Allah ! the swan in my lake waddleth less perfectly. She is as a willow when the wind swayeth it. Allah ! Allah !

Exeunt to the pavilion

SCENE 2

The Pavilion of Pleasure

Anice-aljalice, Nureddene, Sheikh Ibrahim on couches, by a table set with dishes

Nureddene

These kabobs are indeed good, and the conserves look sweet and the fruit very glossy. But will you sit and eat nothing ?

Ibrahim

Verily, my son, I have eaten at midday. Allah forbid me from gluttony !

Anice-aljalice

Old father, you discourage our stomachs. You shall eat a morsel from my fingers or I will say you use me hardly.

Ibrahim

No, no, no, no. Ah well, from your fingers, from your small slim rosy fingers. Allah ! Only a bit, only a morsel : verily, verily ! Allah ! surely thy fingers are sweeter than honey. I could eat them with kisses.

Anice-aljalice

What, old father, you grow young ?

Ibrahim

Oh, now, now, now ! 'Twas a foolish jest unworthy of my grey hairs. I take refuge with Allah ! A foolish jest.

Nureddene

But, my aged host, it is dry eating without wine. Have you never a flagon in all this palace ? It is a blot, a blot on its fair perfection.

Ibrahim

I take refuge with Allah. Wine ! for sixteen years I have not touched the evil thing. When I was young indeed ! Ah well, when I was young. But 'tis forbidden. What saith Ibn Batata ? That wine worketh transmutation. And Ibrahim Alhashhash bin Fuzfuz bin Bierbiloon al Sandilani of Bassora, he rateth wine sorely and averreth that the red glint of it is the shine of the red fires of Hell, its sweetness kisseth damnation and the coolness of it in the throat causeth bifurcation. Ay, verily, the great Alhashhash.

Anice-aljalice

Who are these learned doctors you speak of, old father ? I have read all the books, but never heard of them.

Ibrahim

Oh, thou hast read ? These are very distant and mystic Sufis, very rare doctors. Their books are known only to the adepts.

Anice-aljalice

What a learned old man art thou, Shaikh Ibrahim ! Now Allah save the soul of the great Alhashhash !

Ibrahim

Hm ! 'Tis so. Wine ! Verily, the Prophet hath cursed grower and presser, buyer and seller, carrier and drinker. I take refuge with Allah from the curse of the Prophet.

Nureddene

Hast thou not even one old ass among all thy belongings ? And if an old ass is cursed, is it thou who art cursed ?

Ibrahim

Hm ! My son, what is thy parable ?

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Nureddene

I will show you a trick to cheat the devil. Give three denars of mine to a neighbour's servant with a dirham or two for his trouble, let him buy the wine and clap it on an old ass, and let the old ass bring it here. So art thou neither grower nor presser, seller nor buyer, carrier or drinker, and if any be damned, it is an old ass that is damned. What saith the great Alhashnash.

Ibrahim

Hm ! Well, I will do it. (*aside*) Now I need not let them know that there is wine galore in my cupboards, Allah forgive me !

Exit

Nureddene

He is the very gem of hypocrites.

Anice-aljalice

The fitter to laugh at. Dear my lord, be merry
Tonight, if only for tonight. Let care
Expect tomorrow.

Nureddene

You are happy, Anice ?

Anice-aljalice

I feel as if I could do nothing else
But laugh through life's remainder. You're safe, safe
And that grim devil baffled. Oh, you're safe !

Nureddene

It was a breathless voyage up the river :
I think a price is on my head. Perhaps
Our helpers suffer.

Anice-aljalice

But you are safe, my joy,
My darling.

She goes to him and kisses and clings about him

Nureddene

Anice, your eyes are full of tears !
You are quite overwrought.

Anice-aljalice

Let only you be safe
And all the world beside entirely perish.
My love ! my master !

*She again embraces and kisses him repeatedly. Shaikh Ibrahim
returns with the wine and glasses in a tray*

Ibrahim

Allah ! Allah ! Allah !

Anice-aljalice

Where's that old sober learning ?
I want to dance, to laugh, to outriot riot.
Oh, here he is.

Nureddene

What a quick ass was this, Shaikh Ibrahim !

Ibrahim

No, no, the wineshop is near, very near. Allah forgive us, ours is an
evil city, this Bagdad ; it is full of wine-bibbers and gluttons and liars.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Nureddene

Dost thou ever lie, Shaikh Ibrahim ?

Ibrahim

Allah forbid ! Above all sins I abhor lying and liars. O my son, keep thy young lips from vain babbling and unnecessary lying. It is of the unpardonable sins, it is the way to Jahannam. But I pray thee what is the young lady to thee, my son ?

Nureddene

She is my slavegirl.

Ibrahim

Ah, ah ! thy slavegirl ? Ah, ah ! a slavegirl ! ah !

Anice-aljalice

Drink, my lord.

Nureddene

(drinking)

By the Lord, but I am sleepy. I will even rest my head in thy sweet lap for a moment.

He lies down

Ibrahim

Allah ! Allah ! What, he sleeps ?

Anice-aljalice

Fast. That is the trick he always serves me. After the first cup he dozes off and leaves me quite sad and lonely.

Ibrahim

Why, why, why, little one ! Thou art not alone and why shouldst thou be sad ? I am here,—old Shaikh Ibrahim ; I am here.

Anice-aljalice

I will not be sad, if you will drink with me.

Ibrahim

Fie, fie, fie !

Anice-aljalice

By my head and eyes ?

Ibrahim

Well, well, well ! Alas, 'tis a sin, 'tis a sin, 'tis a sin (*drinks*). Verily, verily.

Anice-aljalice

Another.

Ibrahim

No, no, no.

Anice-aljalice

By my head and eyes !

Ibrahim

Well, well, well, well ! 'Tis a grievous sin, Allah forgive me ! (*drinks*)

Anice-aljalice

Just one more.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Ibrahim

Does he sleep ? Now if it were the wine of thy lips, little one.

Anice-aljalice

Old father, old father ! Is this thy sanctity and the chastity of thee and thy averseness to frivolity ? To flirt with light-minded young hussies like me ! Where is thy sanctification ? Where is thy justification ? Where is thy predestination ? O mystic, thou art bifurked with an evil bifurcation. Woe's me for the great Alhashhash !

Ibrahim

No, no, no.

Anice-aljalice

Art thou such a hypocrite ? Shaikh Ibrahim ! Shaikh Ibrahim !

Ibrahim

No, no, no ! A fatherly jest ! a little little jest ! (*drinks*)

Nureddene

(*starting up*)

Shaikh Ibrahim, thou drinkest ?

Ibrahim

Oh, ah ! 'Twas thy slavegirl forced me. Verily, verily !

Nureddene

Anice ! Anice ! Why wilt thou pester him ? Wilt thou pluck down his old soul from heaven ? Fie ! draw the wine this side of the table. I pledge you, my heart.

Anice-aljalice

To you, my dear one.

Nureddene

You have drunk half your cup only; so, again; to Shaikh Ibrahim and his learned sobriety !

Anicec-aljalice

To the shade of the great Alhashhash !

Ibrahim

Fie on you ! What cursed unneighbourly manners are these, to drink in my face and never pass the bowl ?

Anice-aljalice and Nureddene

(together)

Shaikh Ibrahim ! Shaikh Ibrahim ! Shaikh Ibrahim !

Ibrahim

Never cry out at me. You are a Hour and she is a Houri come down from Heaven to ensnare my soul. Let it be ensnared ! 'Tis not worth one beam from under your eyelids. Hour, I will embrace thee, I will kiss thee, Houri.

Nureddene

Embrace not, Shaikh Ibrahim, neither kiss, for thy mouth smelleth evilly of that accursed thing, wine. I am woeful for the mystic Alhashhash.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Anice-aljalice

Are thou transmogrified, O Sufi, O adept, O disciple of Iḥn Batata ?

Ibrahim

Laugh, laugh ! laughter is on your beauty like the sunlight on the fair minarets of Mazinderan the beautiful. Give me a cup. (*drinks*) You are sinners and I will sin with you. I will sin hard, my beauties. (*drinks*)

Anice-aljalice

Come now, I will sing to you, if you will give me a lute. I am a rare singer, Shaikh Ibrahim.

Ibrahim

(*drinks*)

There is a lute in yonder corner. Sing, sing, and it may be I will answer thee. (*drinks*)

Anice-aljalice

But wait, wait. To sing in this meagreness of light ! Candles, candles.

She lights the eighty candles of the great candelabrum

Ibrahim

(*drinks*)

Allah ! it lights thee up, my slavegirl, my jewel. (*drinks*)

Nureddene

Drink not so fast, Shaikh Ibrahim, but get up and light the lamps in the windows.

Ibrahim

(drinks)

Sin not thou by troubling the coolness of wine in my throat. Light them, light them but not more than two.

Nureddene goes out lighting the lamps one by one and returns in the same way. Meanwhile Shaikh Ibrahim drinks.

Ibrahim

Allah ! hast thou lit them all ?

Amice-aljalice

Shaikh Ibrahim, drunkenness sees but double, and dost thou see eighty-four ? Thou art far gone in thy cups, O adept, O Ibn Bata'ist.

Ibrahim

I am not yet so drunk as that. You are bold youths to light them all.

Nureddene

Whom fearest thou ? Is not the pavilion thine ?

Ibrahim

Surely mine ; but the Caliph dwells near and he will be angry at the glare of so much light.

Nureddene

Truly, he is a great Caliph.

Ibrahim

Great enough, great enough. There might have been greater if Fate had willed it. But 'tis the decree of Allah. Some He raiseth to be Caliphs and some He turneth into gardeners. *(drinks)*

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Anice-aljalice

I have found a lute.

Nureddene

Give it me. Hear me improvise, Old Sobriety.
(Sings) Saw you Shaikh Ibrahim the grave old man ?
Allah ! Allah ! I saw him drunk and drinking
What was he doing when the dance began ?
He was winking ; verily, verily, he was winking.

Ibrahim

Fie ! What cobbler's poetry is this ? But thou hast a touch. Let me
hear thee rather.

Anice-aljalice

I have a song for you.

(Sings) White as winter is my beard,
All my face with wrinkles weird,
Yet I drink.
Hell-fire ? judgment ? who's afraid ?
Ibrahim would kiss a maid
As soon as think.

Ibrahim

Allah ! Allah ! Nightingale ! Nightingale !

Curtain

SCENE 3

The Gardens, outside the Pavilion

Haroun al Rasheed, Mesrour

Haroun al Rasheed

See, Mesrour; the Pavilion's all alight.
'Tis as I said. Where is the Barmeky ?

Mesrour

The Vizier comes, my lord.

Enter Jaafar

Jaafar

Peace be with thee,
Commander of the Faithful.

Haroun al Rasheed

Where is peace,
Thou faithless and usurping Vizier ? Hast thou
Filched my Bagdad out of my hands, thou rebel,
And told me nothing ?

Jaafar

What words are these, O Caliph ?

Haroun al Rasheed

What mean these lights then ? Does another Caliph
Hold revel in my Palace of all Pleasure,
While Haroun lives and holds the sword ?

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Jaafar

(to himself)

What 'Djinn

Plays me this antic ?

Haroun al Rasheed

I am waiting, Vizier.

Jaafar

Shaikh Ibrahim, my lord, petitioned me,
On circumcision of his child, for use
Of the pavilion. Lord, it had escaped
My memory, I now remember it.

Haroun al Rasheed

Doubly thou erredst, Jaafar, for thou gavest him
No money, which was the significance
Of his request, neither wouldst suffer me
To help my servant. We will enter, Vizier,
And hear the grave Faqueers discoursing there
Of venerable things. The Shaikh's devout
And much affects their reverend company.
We too shall profit by that holy talk
Which arms us against sin and helps to heaven.

Jaafar

(to himself)

Helps to the plague ! (*aloud*) Commander of the Faithful,
Your mighty presence will disturb their peace
With awe or quell their free unhampered spirits.

Haroun al Rasheed

At least I'd see them.

Mesrour

From this tower, my lord
We can look straight into the whole pavilion.

Haroun al Rasheed

Mesrour, well thought of !

Jaafar

(aside to Mesrour)

A blister spoil thy tongue !

Mesrour

(aside to Jaafar)

I'll head you, Jaafar.

Haroun al Rasheed

(listening)

Is not that a lute ?
A lute at such a grave and reverend meeting !

Shaikh Ibrahim sings within

Chink-a-chunk-a-chink !
We will kiss and drink,
And be merry, O very very merry.
For your eyes are bright
Even by candle light
And your lips as red as the red round cherry.

Haroun al Rasheed

Now by the Prophet ! by my great forefathers !

He rushes into the tower followed by Mesrour

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Jaafar

May the devil fly away with Shaikh Ibrahim and drop him upon a hill of
burning brimstone !

*He follows the Caliph, who now appears with Mesrour
on the platform of the tower*

Haroun al Rasheed

Ho, Jaafar, see this godly ceremony
Thou gav'st permission for, and these fair Faqueers.

Jaafar

Shaikh Ibrahim has utterly deceived me.

Haroun al Rasheed

The aged hypocrite ! Who are this pair
Of heavenly faces ? Was there then such beauty
In my Bagdad, yet Haroun's eyes defrauded
Of seeing it ?

Jaafar

The girl takes up the lute.

Haroun al Rasheed

Now if she play and sing divinely, Jaafar,
You shall be hanged alone for your offence,
If badly, all you four shall swing together.

Jaafar

I hope she will play vilely.

Haroun al Rasheed

Wherefore, Jaafar ?

Jaafar

I ever loved good company, my lord,
And would not tread my final road alone.

Haroun al Rasheed

No, when thou goest that road, my faithful servant,
Well do I hope that we shall walk together.

Anice-aljalice

(*within*)

Song

King of my heart, wilt thou adore me,
Call me goddess, call me thine ?
I too will bow myself before thee
As in a shrine.
Till we with mutual adoration
And holy earth-defeating passion
Do really grow divine.

Haroun al Rasheed

The mighty Artist shows his delicate cunning
Utterly in this fair creature. I will talk
With the rare couple.

Jaafar

Not in your own dread person,
Or fear will make them dumb.

Haroun al Rasheed

I'll go disguised.
Are there not voices by the river, Jaafar ?

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Fishermen, I would wager. My commands
Are well obeyed in my Bagdad, O Vizier !
But I have seen too much beauty and cannot now
Remember to be angry. Come, descend.

As they descend, enter Kareem

Kareem

Here's a fine fat haul ! O my jumpers ! my little beauties ! O your fine
white bellies ! What a joke, to catch the Caliph's own fish and sell them
to him at thrice their value !

Haroun al Rasheed

Who art thou ?

Kareem

O Lord, 'tis the Caliph himself ! I am a dead fisherman. (*falling flat*)
O Commander of the Faithful ! Alas, I am an honest fisherman.

Haroun al Rasheed

Dost thou lament thy honesty ?
What fish hast thou ?

Kareem

Only a few whitebait and one or two minnows. Poor thin rogues, all of
them ! They are not fit for the Caliph's honourable stomach.

Haroun al Rasheed

Show me thy basket, man.
Are these thy whitebait and thy two thin minnows ?

Kareem

Alas, sir, 'tis because I am honest.

Haroun al Rasheed

Give me thy fish.

Kareem

Here they are, here they are, my lord !

Haroun al Rasheed

Out ! the whole basket, fellow.
Do I eat live fish, you thrust them in my face ?
And now exchange thy outer dress with me.

Kareem

My dress ? Well, you may have it : I am liberal as well as honest. But 'tis a good gaberdine; I pray you, be careful of it.

Haroun al Rasheed

Woe to thee, fellow ! What's this filthiness
Thou call'st a garment ?

Kareem

O Sir, when you have worn it ten days, the filth will come easy to you and, as one may say, natural. And 'tis honest filth; it will keep you warm in winter.

Haroun al Rasheed

What, shall I wear thy gaberdine so long ?

Kareem

Commander of the Faithful ! Since you are about to leave kingcraft and follow an honest living for the good of your soul, you may wear worse than an honest fisherman's gaberdine. 'Tis a good craft and an honourable.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Haroun al Rasheed

Off with thee. In my dress thou'lt find a purse
Crammed full of golden pieces. It is thine.

Kareem

Glory to Allah ! This comes of being honest.

Exit

Jaafar

(coming up)

Who's this ? Ho, Kareem ! wherefore here tonight ?
The Caliph's in the garden. You'll be thrashed
And very soundly, fisher.

Haroun al Rasheed

Jaafar, 'tis I.

Jaafar

The Caliph ?

Haroun al Rasheed

Now to fry these fish and enter.

Jaafar

Give them to me. I am a wondrous cook.

Haroun al Rasheed

No, by the Prophet ! My two lovely friends
Shall eat a Caliph's cookery tonight.

Exeunt

SCENE 4

Inside the Pavilion

Nureddene, Anice-aljalice, Shaikh Ibrahim

Nureddene

Shaikh Ibrahim, verily thou art drunk.

Ibrahim

Alas, alas, my dear son, my own young friend ! I am damned, verily, verily, I am damned. Ah, my sweet lovely young father ! Ah, my pious learned white-bearded mother ! That they could see their son now, their pretty little son ! But they are in their graves; they are in their cold, cold graves.

Nureddene

Oh, thou art most pathetically drunk. Sing, Anice.

Outside

Fish ! fish ! sweet fried fish !

Anice-aljalice

Fish ! Shaikh Ibrahim, Shaikh Ibrahim ! hearest thou ? We have a craving for fish.

Ibrahim

'Tis Satan in thy little stomach who calleth hungrily for sweet fish. Silence, thou preposterous devil !

Anice-aljalice

Fie, Shaikh, is my stomach outside me, under the window ? Call him in.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Ibrahim

Ho ! ho ! come in, Satan ! come in, thou brimstone fisherman. Let us see thy long tail.

Enter Haroun

Anice-aljalice

What fish have you, good fisherman ?

Haroun al Rasheed

I have very honest good fish, my sweet lady, and I have fried them for you with my own hand. These fish,—why, all I can say of them is, they are fish. But they are well fried.

Nureddene

Set them on a plate. What wilt thou have for them ?

Haroun al Rasheed

Why, for such faces as you have, I will honestly ask nothing.

Nureddene

Then wilt thou dishonestly ask for a trifle more than they are worth. Swallow me these denars.

Haroun al Rasheed

Now Allah give thee a beard ! for thou art a generous youth.

Anice-aljalice

Fie, fisherman, what a losing blessing is this, to kill the thing for which thou blessest him ! If Allah give him a beard, he will be no longer a youth, and for the generosity, it will be Allah's.

Haroun al Rasheed

Art thou as witty as beautiful ?

Anice-aljalice

By Allah, that am I. I tell thee very modestly that there is not my equal from China to Frangistan.

Haroun al Rasheed

Thou sayest no more than truth.

Nureddene

What is your name, fisherman ?

Haroun al Rasheed

I call myself Kareem, and in all honesty when I fish, 'tis for the Caliph.

Ibrahim

Who talks of the Caliph ? Dost thou speak of the Caliph Haroun or the Caliph Ibrahim ?

Haroun al Rasheed

I speak of *the* Caliph, Haroun the Just, the great and only Caliph.

Ibrahim

Oh, Haroun ? He is fit only to be a gardener, a poor witless fellow without brains to dress himself with, yet Allah hath made him Caliph. While there are others—but 'tis no use talking. A very profligate tyrant, this Haroun ! He has debauched half the women in Bagdad and will debauch the other half, if they let him live. Besides, he cuts off a man's head when the nose on it does not please him. A very pestilence of a tyrant !

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Haroun al Rasheed

Now Allah save him !

Ibrahim

Nay, let Allah save his soul if He will and if 'tis worth saving, but I fear me 'twill be a tough job for Allah. If it were not for my constant rebukes and admonitions and predications and pestrigiddi—prestigidgide—what the plague ! pestidigitations, and some slaps and cuffs of which I pray you speak very low, he would be worse even than he is. Well, well, even Allah blunders; verily, verily !

Anice-aljalice

Will thou be Caliph, Shaikh Ibrahim ?

Ibrahim

Yes, my jewel, and thou shall be my Zobeidah. And we will tipple, beauty, we will tipple.

Haroun al Rasheed

And Haroun ?

Ibrahim

I will be generous and make him my under-kitchen-gardener's second vice-sub-under-assistant. I would gladly give him a higher post, but, verily, he is not fit.

Haroun al Rasheed

(laughing)

What an old treasonous rogue art thou, Shaikh Ibrahim !

Ibrahim

What ? who ? Thou art not Satan, but Kareem the fisherman? Didst thou say I was drunk, thou supplier of naughty houses ? Verily, I will tug thee by the beard, for thou liest. Verily, verily !

Nureddene

Shaikh Ibrahim ! Shaikh Ibrahim !

Ibrahim

Nay, if thou art the angel Gabriel and forbiddest me, let be, but I hate lying and liars.

Nureddene

Fisherman, is thy need here over ?

Haroun al Rasheed

I pray you, let me hear this young lady sing; for indeed 'twas the sweet voice of her made me fry fish for you.

Nureddene

Oblige the good fellow, Anice; he has a royal face for his fishing.

Ibrahim

Sing ! 'tis I will sing : there is no voice like mine in Bagdad.

(sings)

When I was a young man,
I'd a very good plan;
Every maid that I met,
In my lap I would set,
What mattered her age or her colour ?

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

But now I am old
And the girls they grow cold
And my heartstrings, they ache
At the faces they make,
And my dancing is turned into dolour.

A very sweet song ! a very sad song ! Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought. 'Tis just, 'tis just. Ah me ! well-a-day ! Verily, verily !

Anice-aljalice

I pray you, Shaikh Ibrahim, be quiet. I would sing.

Ibrahim

Sing, my jewel, sing, my gazelle, sing, my lady of kisses. Verily, I would rise up and buss thee, could I but find my legs. I know not why they have taken them from me.

Anice-aljalice

(sings)

Song

Heart of mine, O heart impatient,
Thou must learn to wait and weep.
Wherefore wouldst thou go on beating
When I bade thee hush and sleep ?
Thou who wert of life so fain,
Didst thou know not, life was pain ?

Haroun al Rasheed

O voice of angels ! Who art thou, young man,
And who this sweet-voiced wonder ? Let me hear;
Tell me thy story.

Nureddene

I am a man chastised
For my own errors, yet unjustly. Justice
I seek from the great Caliph. Leave us, fisherman.

Haroun al Rasheed

Tell me thy story. Walk apart with me.
It may be I can help thee.

Nureddene

Leave us, I pray thee.
Thou, a poor fisherman !

Haroun al Rasheed

I vow I'll help thee.

Nureddene

Art thou the Caliph ?

Haroun al Rasheed

If I were, by chance ?

Nureddene

If thou art as pressing with the fish as me,
There's a good angler.

Exit with Haroun

Anice-aljalice

Will you not have some of this fish, Shaikh Ibrahim ? 'Tis a sweet fish.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Ibrahim

Indeed thou art a sweet fish, but somewhat overdone. Thou hast four lovely eyes and two noses wonderfully fine with just the right little curve at the end; 'tis a hook to hang my heart upon. But, verily there are two of them and I know not what to do with the other. I have only one heart, beauty. O, Allah, Thou hast darkened my brain with wine, and wilt Thou damn me afterwards ?

Anice-aljalice

Nay, if thou wilt misuse my nose for a peg, I have done with thee. My heart misgives me strangely.

Enter Nureddene

Nureddene

He's writing out a letter.

Anice-aljalice

Surely, my lord,
This is no ordinary fisherman.
If 'twere the Caliph ?

Nureddene

The old drunkard knew him
For Kareem and a fisherman. Dear Anice,
Let not our dreams delude us. Life is harsh,
Dull-tinted, not so kindly as our wishes,
Nor half so beautiful.

Enter Haroun

Haroun al Rasheed

He is not fit
To be a King.

Nureddene

Nor ever was. 'Tis late.

Haroun al Rasheed

Givest thou no gift at parting ?

Nureddene

You're a fisher ! (*opens his purse*)

Haroun al Rasheed

Nothing more valuable ?

Anice-aljalice

Wilt take this ring ?

Haroun al Rasheed

No ; give me what I ask.

Nureddene

Yes, by the Prophet,
Because thou hast a face !

Haroun al Rasheed

Give me thy slavegirl.

(*There is a silence*)

Nureddene

Thou hast entrapped me, fisherman.

Anice-aljalice

Is it a jest ?

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Haroun al Rasheed

Thou sworest by the Prophet, youth.

Nureddene

Tell me.

Is it for ransom ? I have nothing left
In all the world but her and these few pieces.

Haroun al Rasheed

She pleases me.

Anice-aljalice

O wretch !

Nureddene

Another time
I would have slain thee. But now I feel 'tis God
Has snared my feet with dire calamities,
And have no courage.

Haroun al Rasheed

Dost thou give her to me.

Nureddene

Take her, if Heaven will let thee. Angel of God,
Avenging angel, wert thou lying in wait for me
In Bagdad ?

Anice-aljalice

Leave me not, O leave me not.
It is a jest, it must, it shall be a jest
God will not suffer it.

Haroun al Rasheed

I mean thee well.

Anice-aljalice

Thy doing's damnable. O man, O man,
Art thou a devil straight from Hell, or art thou
A tool of Almuene's to torture us ?
Will you leave me, my lord, and never kiss ?

Nureddene

Thou art his ; I cannot touch thee.

Haroun al Rasheed

Kiss her once.

Nureddene

Tempt me not ; if my lips grow near to hers,
Thou canst not live. Farewell.

Haroun al Rasheed

Where art thou bound ?

Nureddene

To Bassora.

Haroun al Rasheed

That is, to death ?

Nureddene

Even so.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Haroun al Rasheed

Yet take this letter with thee to the Sultan.

Nureddene

Man, what have I to do with thee or letters ?

Haroun al Rasheed

Hear me, fair youth. Thy love is sacred to me
And will be safe as in her father's house.
Take thou this letter. Though I seem a fisherman,
I was the Caliph's friend and schoolfellow,
His cousin of Bassora's too, and it may help thee.

Nureddene

I know not who thou art, nor if this scrap
Of paper has the power thou babblest of,
And do not greatly care. Life without her
Is not to be thought of. Yet thou giv'st me something
I'd once have dared call hope. She will be safe ?

Haroun al Rasheed

As my own child, or as the Caliph's.

Nureddene

I'll go play
At pitch and toss with death in Bassora.

Exit

Ibrahim

Kareem, thou evil fisherman, thou unjust seller, thou dishonest dicer,
thou beastly womanizer ! hast thou given me stinking fish not worth

a dirham and thinkest to take away my slavegirl. Verily, I will tug thy beard for her.

He seizes Haroun by the beard

Haroun al Rasheed

(throwing him off)

Out ! Hither to me, Vizier Jaafar. (*Enter Jaafar*). Hast thou my robe ?

He changes his dress

Jaafar

How dost thou, Shaik Ibrahim ? Fie, thou smellest of that evil thing, even the accursèd creature, wine.

Ibrahim

O Satan, Satan, dost thou come to me in the guise of Jaafar, the Persian, the Shiah, the accursèd favourer of Gnosticism and heresies, the evil and bibulous Vizier? Avaunt, and return not save with a less damnable face. O thou inconsiderate fiend ?

Haroun al Rasheed

Damsel, lift up thy head. I am the Caliph.

Anice-aljalice

What does it matter who you are ? My heart, my heart !

Haroun al Rasheed

Thou art bewildered. Rise ! I am the Caliph
Men call the Just. Thou art as safe with me
As my own daughter. I have sent thy lord
To be a king in Bassora, and thee
I will send after him with precious robes,
Fair slavegirls, noble gifts. Possess thy heart
Once more, be glad.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Anice-aljalice

O just and mighty Caliph !

Haroun al Rasheed

Shaikh Ibrahim.

Ibrahim

Verily, I think thou art the Caliph, and verily, I think I am drunk.

Haroun al Rasheed

Verily, thou hast told the truth, twice, and it is a wonder. But verily, verily, verily, thou shalt be punished. Thou hast been kind to the boy and his sweetheart, therefore I will not take from thee thy life or thy post in the gardens, and I will forgive thee for tugging the beard of the Lord's anointed. But thy hypocrisies and blasphemies are too rank to be forgiven. Jaafar, have a man with him constantly and wine before his eyes; but if he drink so much as a thimbleful, let it be poured by gallons into his stomach. Have in beautiful women constantly before him and if he once raise his eyes above their anklets, shave him clean and sell him into the most severe and Puritan house in Bagdad. Nay, I will reform thee, old sinner.

Ibrahim

Oh, her lips ! her sweet lips !

Jaafar

You speak to a drunken man, my lord.

Haroun al Rasheed

Tomorrow bring him before me when he's sober.

Exeunt

ACT V

Bassora and Bagdad

SCENE I

A room in Almuene's house

Almuene ; Fareed

Fareed

You'll give me money, dad ?

Almuene

You spend too much.
We'll talk of it another time. Now leave me.

Fareed

You'll give me money ?

Almuene

Go ; I'm out of temper.

Fareed

(dancing round him)

Give money, money, money, give me money.

Almuene

You boil, do you too grow upon me ? There. *(strikes him)*

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Fareed

You have struck me

Almuene

You shall have money. Why, you would have it. Go.

Fareed

How much ?

Almuene

Send me a cup of water. Quite half your asking.

Fareed

You'll strike me then ? Oh yes, I'll send it.

Exit

Almuene

Young Nureddene's evasion
Troubles me at the heart ; it will not dislodge.
And Murad too walks closely with the King,
Who whispers to him, whispers, whispers. What ?
Is't of my ruin ? No, he needs me yet.
And Ibn Sawy's coming soon. But there
I've triumphed. He will have a meagre profit
Of his long work in Roum,—the headsman's axe.

Enter a slave with a cup of water

Here set it down and wait. 'Tis not so bad.
I'll have their Doonya yet for my Fareed.

Enter Khatoon, dragging in Fareed

Khatoon

He has not drunk it yet.

Fareed

Why do you drag me,
You naughty woman ? I will bite your fingers.

Khatoon

O imp of Hell ! Touch not the water, Vizier.

Almuene

What's this ?

Khatoon

This brat whose soul you've disproportioned
Out of all nature, turns upon you now.
There's poison in that cup.

Almuene

Unnatural mother,
What is this hatred that thou hast, to slander
The issue of thy womb ?

Fareed

She hates me, dad.
Drink off the cup to show her how you love me.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Khatoon

What, art thou weary of thy life ? Give rather
The water to a dog and see.

Almuene

Go, slave,
And make some negro drink it off. (*Exit slave*). Woman,
What I have promised often, thou shalt have,—
The scourge.

Khatoon

That were indeed my right reward
For saving such a life as thine. Oh, God
Will punish me for it.

Almuene

Thou tongue ! I'll strike thee.

As he lifts his hand the slave returns

Slave

Oh, sir, almost before it touched his throat,
He fell in fierce convulsions. He is dead.

Almuene

Fareed !

Fareed

You'll strike me, will you ? You'll give half
My askings, no ? I wish you'd drunk it off;
I'd have rare spendings !

He runs out

Almuene

God !

Khatoon

Will you not scourge me ?

Almuene

Leave me.

Exit Khatoon

What is this horrible surprise,
Beneath whose shock I stagger ? Is my term
Exhausted ? But I would have done as much,
Had I been struck. It is his gallant spirit,
His lusty blood that will not bear a blow.
I must appease him. If my own blood should end me !
He shall have money, all that he can ask.

Exit

SCENE 2

The Palace in Bassora

Alzayni, Murad, Almuene, Ajebe

Alzayni

I like your nephew well and will advance him.
For what's twixt you and Murad, let it sleep.
You are both my trusty counsellors.

Almuene

A nothing,
I grieve I pressed; forget it, noble Murad.

Murad

That's as you please.

Almuene

Come, you're my nephew too.

Voice outside

Ho, Mohamad Alzayni, Sultan, Ho !

Alzayni

Who is that Arab ?

Almuene

(at the window)

God ! 'tis Nureddene.

Impossible !

Alzayni

Or he is courage-mad.

Almuene

'Tis he.

Murad

The devil and his unholy joy !

Alzayni

Drag him to me ! No, bring him quietly,
Ajebe.

Exit Ajebe

I wonder in what strength he comes.

Almuene

The strength of madness.

Murad

Or of Heaven, whose wrath
Sometimes chastises us with our desires.

Enter Ajebe with Nureddene

Nureddene

Greeting, Alzayni, King in Bassora.
Greeting, sweet uncle. Has your nose got straight ?
Ajebe and Murad, greeting. Here am I !

Alzayni

How dar'st thou come and with such rude demeanour ?
Knowst thou thy sentence ?

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Nureddene

Why, I bring a sentence too,
A fishy writing. Here it is. Be careful of it;
It is my die on which I throw for death
Or more than life.

Alzayni

A letter, and to me ?

Nureddene

Great King, 'tis from thy friend the fisherman,
He with the dirty gaberdine who lives
In great Bagdad on stolen fish.

Alzayni

Thinkst thou
That thou canst play thus rudely with the lion ?

Nureddene

If I could see the mane, I'd clutch at it.
A lashing tail is not enough. The tiger
Has that too, and many trifling animals.
But read the letter.

Alzayni

Read it, Almuene.

Almuene

'Tis from the Caliph, it appears. Thus runs
The alleged epistle; "Haroun al Rasheed,
Commander of the Faithful, known by name

To orient waters and the Atlantic seas,
Whom three wide continents obey, to Mohamad
The Abbasside, the son of Sulyman,
Men call Alzayni, by our gracious will
Allowed our subject king in Bassora,
Greeting and peace. As soon as thou hast read
Our letter, put from thee thy kingly robe,
Thy jewelled turban and thy sceptred pomp
And clothe with them the bearer Nureddene,
Son of thy Vizier, monarch in thy stead
In Bassora, then come to us in Bagdad
To answer for thy many and great offences.
This as thou hop'st to live."

Nureddene

It was the Caliph.

Alzayni

My mighty cousin's will must be obeyed.
Why turnst thou to the light ?

Almuene

To scan it better.
King, 'tis a forgery ! Where is the seal,
Where the imperial scripture ? Is it thus
On a torn paper mighty Caliphs write ?
Now on my life the fellow here has chanced
Upon some playful scribbling of the Caliph's,
Put in his name and thine and, brazen-faced,
Come here to bluster.

Ajebe

It was quite whole, I saw it.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Almuene

Boy, silence !

Ajebe

No, I will not. Thou hast torn it.

Almuene

Where are the pieces then ? Search, if thou wilt.

Alzayni

Ho, there.

Enter Guards

Take Ajebe to the prison hence.
He shall have judgment afterwards.

Exit Ajebe, guarded

Thou, fellow,
Com'st thou with brazen face and blustering tongue
And forgeries in thy pocket ? Hale him hence.
After fierce tortures let him be impaled.

Murad

Hear me, O King.

Alzayni

Thou art his sister's husband.

Murad

Yet for thy own sake hear me. Hast thou thought,
If this be true, what fate will stride upon thee
When Haroun learns thy deed ? whom doubt not, King,
Thy many enemies will soon acquaint.

Alzayni

Send couriers; find this out.

Almuene

Till when I'll keep
My nephew safe under my private eye.

Murad

Thou art his enemy.

Almuene

And thou his friend.
He will escape from thee once more.

Alzayni

Vizier,
Thou keep him, use him well.

Almuene

Ho ! take him, guards.

Enter guards

Nureddene

I lose the toss; 'tis tails.

Exit guarded

Alzayni

All leave me. Vizier,
Remain.

Exit Murad

Now, Almuene ?

Almuene

Kill him and be at rest.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Alzayni

If 'twere indeed the Caliph's very hand ?
Vizier, I dare not suddenly.

Almuene

Dare not !
Nay, then, put off thy crown at Haroun's bidding,
Who'll make thee his doorkeeper in Bagdad.
The Caliph ? How long will this drunken freak
Have lodging in his lordly mind ? Or fear'st thou
The half-veiled threat of thy own trusty Turk,
Sultan Alzayni ?

Alzayni

Him I'll silence. Keep
The boy ten days; then, if all's well, behead him.

Exit

Almuene

You boggle, boggle; that is not the way
To keep a crown. Have him and hold's the Vizier,
Catch him and cut's the General. Loose your grip ?
Let the hand shake ? So monarchs are unkinged.
Ten days are mine at least. I have ten days
To torture him, though Caliphs turn his friend.
Will God befriend him next ? My enemies
He gives into my potent hand. Murad is gone,
And I hold Doonya in my grip, Ameena too
Who, I have news, lives secret with her niece.
But where's the girl ? God keeps her for me, I doubt not,
A last sweet morsel. It will please Fareed.
But there's Haroun ! Why should he live at all,
When there are swords and poisons ?

Exit

SCENE 3

A cell in Almuene's house

Nureddene alone

Nureddene

We sin our pleasant sins and then refrain
And think that God's deceived. He waits His time
And when we walk the clean and polished road
He trips us with the mire our shoes yet keep,
The pleasant mud we walked before. All ills
I will bear patiently. Oh, better here
Than in that world ! Who comes ? Khatoon, my aunt !

Enter Khatoon and a slave

Khatoon

My Nureddene !

Nureddene

Good aunt, weep not for me.

Khatoon

You are my sister's child, yet more my own.
I have no other. Ali, mend his food
And treatment. Fear not thou the Vizier's wrath,
For I will shield thee.

Slave

I'll do it willingly.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Khatoon

What is this sound of many rushing feet ?

Enter Almuene and Slaves

Almuene

Seize him and bind. O villain, fatal villain !
O my heart's stringlet ! Seize him, beat to powder,
Have burning irons. Dame, what do you here ?
Wilt thou prevent me then ?

Khatoon

Let no man touch
The prisoner of the Sultan. What's this rage ?

Almuene

My son, my son ! He has burned my heart. Shall I
Not burn his body ?

Khatoon

What is it ? Tell me quickly.

Almuene

Fareed is murdered.

Khatoon

God forbid ! By whom ?

Almuene

This villain's sister.

Khatoon

Doonya ? You are mad. Speak slave.

A Slave

Young master went with a great company
To Murad's house to carry Doonya off,
Who then was seated listening to the lute,
With Balkis and Mymoona, Ajebe's slavegirls.
We stormed the house, but could not take the lady;
Mymoona with a sword kept all at bay
For minutes. Meantime the city fills with rumour,
And Murad riding like a stormy wind
Came on us just too soon, the girl defender
Found wounded, Doonya at last in Fareed's grip
Who made a shield of that fair burden; but Balkis
Ran at and tripped him and the savage Turk
Fire-eyed and furious lunged him through the body.
He's dead.

Khatoon

My son !

Almuene

Will you now give me leave
To torture this vile boy ?

Khatoon

What is his fault ?
Touch him and I acquaint the King. Vizier,
Thou slew'st Fareed. My gracious, laughing babe,
Who clung about me with his little hands
And sucked my breasts ! Him you have murdered, Vizier,

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Both soul and body. I will go and pray
For vengeance on thee for my slaughtered child.

Exit

Almuene

She has balked my fury. No, I'll wait for thee.
Thou shalt hear first what I have done with Doonya
And thy soft mother's body. Murad ! Murad !
Thou hast no son. Would God thou hadst a son !

Exit

Nureddene

Not upon others fall Thy heavy scourge
Who are not guilty. O Doonya, O my mother,
In fiercest peril from that maddened tyrant !

Curtain

SCENE 4

A house in Bassora

Doonya, Ameena

Doonya

Comfort, dear mother, comfort.

Ameena

Oh, what comfort ?

My Nureddene is doomed, Murad is gaoled,
We in close hiding under the vile doom
This tyrant King decrees.

Doonya

I did not think

God was so keen-eyed for our petty sins,
When great offences and high criminals
Walk smiling. But there's comfort, mother, yet.
My husband writes from prison. You shall hear.

(reads)

"Doonya, I have written this by secret contrivance. Have comfort, dry thy mother's tears. There is hope. The Caliph comes to Bassora and the King will release me for a need of his own. I have tidings of thy father; he is but two days journey from Bassora and I have sent him urgent and tremulous word to come, but no ill-news to break his heart. We have friends. Doonya, my beloved—"

That's for me only.

Ameena

Let me hear it.

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Doonya

It is
Pure nonsense,—what a savage Turk would write.⁴

Ameena

Therefore you kissed it ?

Doonya

Oh, you're comforted !
You're smiling through your tears.

Ameena

My husband comes.
He will save all. I never quite believed
God would forget his worth so soon.

Doonya

(to herself)

He comes,
But for what fate ? (*aloud*) True, mother, he'll save all.

Ameena

How is Mymoona ?

Doonya

Better now. She suffered
In our wild rapid flight. Balkis is with her.
Let's go to them.

Ameena

My son will yet be saved.

Exeunt

SCENE 5

Bagdad

A room in the Caliph's harem

Anice-aljalice with many slave-girls attending on her

Anice-aljalice

Girls, is he passing ?

A slave-girl

He is passing.

Anice-aljalice

Quick, my lute !

Song

The Emperor of Roum is great;
The Caliph has a mighty State;
But One is greater, to Whom all prayers take wing;
And I, a poor and weeping slave,
When the world rises from its grave,
Shall stand up the accuser of my King.

Girls, is he coming up ?

A slave-girl

The Caliph enters.

Enter Haroun and Jaafar

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Haroun al Rasheed

Thou art the slave-girl, Anice-aljalice ?
Why chosest thou that song ?

Anice-aljalice

Where is my lord ?
Caliph, for thee.

Haroun al Rasheed

A king in Bassora.

Anice-aljalice

Who told thee ?

Haroun al Rasheed

So it must be.

Anice-aljalice

Is there news ;

Haroun al Rasheed

No, strange ! Seven days gone by nor yet a letter!

Anice-aljalice

Caliph, high sovereign, Haroun al Rasheed,
Men call thee Just, Great Abbasside ! I am
A poor and helpless slavegirl, but my grief
Is greater than a King. Lord, I demand
My soul's dear husband at thy hand, who sent him
Alone, unfollowed, without guard or friend
To a tyrant Sultan and more tyrant Vizier,
His potent enemies. Oh, they have killed him !
Give back my husband to my arms unhurt

Or I will rise upon the judgment day
 Against thee, Caliph Haroun al Rasheed;
 Demanding him at that eternal throne
 Where names are not received, nor earthly pomps
 Considered. Then my frail and woman's voice
 Shall ring more dreadful in thy mighty hearing
 Than doom's own trumpet. Answer my demand.

Haroun al Rasheed

Anice, I do believe thy lord is well.
 And yet—No, by my great forefathers, no !
 My seal and signature were on the script,
 And they are mightier than a thousand armies.
 If he has disobeyed, for him 'twere better
 He were a beggar's unrespected child
 Than Haroun's kin;—the Arabian simoom
 Shall be less devastating than my wrath.
 Out, Jaafar, out to Bassora, behind thee
 Sweeping embattled war; nor night nor tempest
 Delay thy march. I follow in thy steps.
 Take too this damsel and these fifty slavegirls,
 With robes and gifts for Bassora's youthful king.
 I give thee power o'er Kings and Emperors
 To threaten, smite and seize. Go, friend, I follow
 As swift as thunder presses on the lightning.

Exit

Jaafar

(to the slave-girls)

Make ready; for we march within the hour.

Exit

Curtain

SCENE 6

The public square of Bassora

Alzayani on a dais; in front a scaffold on which stand Nureddene, an Executioner, Murad and others. Almuene moves between the dais and scaffold. The square is crowded with people.

Executioner

Ho ! listen, listen, Moslems. Nureddene,
Son of Alfazzal, son of Sawy, stands
Upon the rug of blood, the man who smote
Great Viziers and came armed with forgeries
To uncrown mighty Kings. Look on his doom,
You enemies of great Alzayni, look and shake.

(Low, to Nureddene)

My lord, forgive me who am thus compelled,
Oh much against my will, to ill-requite
Your father's kindly favours.

Nureddene

I thirst. **Give me water;**

Murad

Give water. Executioner,
When the King waves the signal, wait; strike not
Too hastily.

Executioner

Captain, I will await thy nod.
Here's water.

Almuene

(coming up)

Rebellious sworder ! Givest thou drink
To the King's enemies !

A voice in the crowd

God waits for thee,
Thou wicked Vizier.

Almuene

Who was that ?

Murad

Behead it. A voice.

Almuene

Mighty Sultan, give the word.

Alzayni

There is a movement in the crowd and cries.
Wait for one moment.

Almuene

It is Ibn Sawy
Oh, this is sweet !

Cries

Make way for the Vizier, the good Vizier. He's saved ! he's saved.

Enter Alfazzal; he looks with emotion at Nureddene, then turns to the King

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Ibn Sawy

Greeting, my King; my work in Roum is over.

Alzayni

Virtuous Alfazzal ! we will talk with the
As ever was our dearest pleasure; first,
There is a spotted soul to be dislodged
From the fair body it disgraced; a trifle
Soon ended. There behold the criminal.

Ibn Sawy

The crimial ! Pardon me, mighty King;
The voice of nature will not be kept down.
Why wilt thou slay my son ?

Alzayni

Nay, 'tis himself
Insisted obstinately on his doom;
Abused his King, battered and beat my Vizier,
Forged mighty Haroun's signature to wear
My crown in Bassora. These are the chief
Of his offences.

Ibn Sawy

If this thing is true,
As doubtless near inquiry in Bagdad—

Alzayni

Nay, take not up thy duties all too soon.
Rest from thy travel, bury thy dear son
And afterwards resume thy faithful works,
My Vizier

Ibn Sawy

I would not see my dear child slain.
Permit me to depart and in my desolate house
Comfort the stricken mother and his kin.

Alzayni

Perhaps a stone of all thy house may stand.
The mother and thy niece ? It hurts my heart.
They too are criminals and punished.

Ibn Sawy

God !

Alzayni

Slaves, help my faithful Vizier ; he will faint.

Ibn Sawy

Let me alone ; God made me strong to bear.
They are dead ?

Alzayni

Nay, a more lenient penalty.
What did I order ? To be led through Bassora
Bare in their shifts with halters round thair necks,
And, stripped before all eyes, whipped into swooning,
Then sold as slaves but preferably for little
To some low Nazarene or Jew. Was that
The order, Almuene ?

Ibn Sawy

Merciful Allah !

And it is done ?

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Alzayni

I doubt not, it is done.

Ibn Sawy

Their crime ?

Alzayni

Conspiring murder. They have killed
The son of Almuene. Good Ibn Sawy,
God's kind to thee who has relieved thy age
Of human burdens. Thus He turns thy thought
To His ineffable and simple peace.

Ibn Sawy

God, Thou art mighty and Thy will is just.
King Mohamad Alzayni, I have come
To a changed world in which I am not needed.
I bid farewell.

Alzayni

Nay, Vizier, clasp thy son,
And afterwards await within my hearing
Release.

Ibn Sawy

My Nureddene, my child !

Nureddene

Justice
Of God, thou spar'st me nothing. Father ! Father

Ibn Sawy

Bow to the will of God, my son ; if thou
Must perish on a false and hateful charge,
A crime in thee impossible, believe
It is His justice still.

Nureddene

I well believe it.

Ibn Sawy

I doubt not I will join you, son. We'll hold
Each other's hands upon the narrow way.

Alzayni

Hast done, Alfazzal ?

Ibn Sawy

Do thy will, O King.

Alzayni

(waving his hand)

Strike.

Trumpets outside

What are these proud notes ? this cloud of dust
That rushes towards us from the north ? The earth
Trembles with horsehooves.

Almuene

Let this wretch be slain
We shall have leisure then for greater things.

SRI AUROBINDO MĀNDĪR ANNUAL

Alzayni

Pause, pause ! A horseman gallops through the crowd
Which scatters like wild dust. Look, he dismounts.†

Enter a soldier

Soldier

Hail to thee, Mohamad Alzayni ! Greeting
From mightier than thyself.

Alzayni

What art thou, Arab ?

Soldier

Jaafar bin Barmak, Vizier world-renowned
Of Haroun, master of the globe, comes hither.
He's in your streets, Alzayni. Thus he bids thee:
If Nureddene, thy Vizier's son, yet lives,
Preserve him, Sultan, as thy own dear life ;
For if he dies, thou shalt not live.

Alzayni

My guards !

My soldiers ! here to me !

Soldier

Beware, Alzayni.
The force he brings could dislocate each stone
In Bassora within the hour and leave
Thy house a ruin. In his mighty wake
A mightier comes, the Caliph's self.

Alzayni

'Tis well.

I have but erred. My Murad, here to me !
Murad, thou shalt have gold, a house, estate,
Noble and wealthy women for thy wives.
Murad !

Murad

Erred, King, indeed who took a soldier
For an assassin. King, my household gem
I have saved and want no others. Were she gone,
Thou wouldst not now be living.

Alzayni

Am I betrayed ?

Murad

Call it so, King.

Alzayni

My throne is tumbling down.
The crowd quite parts, the horsemen drive towards us.

Almuene

Sultan Alzayni, kill thy enemies,
Then die. Wilt thou be footed to Bagdad,
Stumbling in fetters ?

Alzayni

They are here.

Enter Jaafar and soldiers

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Jaafar

This sight
Is thy own sentence. Mohamed Alzayni,
Allah deprived thee of reason to destroy thee,
When thou didst madly disobey thy lord.

Almuene

'Twas a mistake, great Vizier. We had thought
The script a forgery.

Jaafar

Issue of Khakan,
I have seen many Viziers like thyself,
But none that died in peace. Hail, Nureddene !
I greet thee, Sultan, lord in Bassora.

Nureddene

It is the second toss that tells, the first
Was a pure foul. I thank Thee, who hast only
Shown me the edge of thy chastising sword,
Then pardoned. Father, embrace me.

Ibn Sawy

Ah, child,

Thy mother and thy sister !

Murad

They are safe
And in my care.

Ibn Sawy

Nay, God is kind; this world
Most leniently ruled.

Jaafar

Sultan Alzayni, Vizier Almuene,
By delegated power I seize upon you,
The prisoners of the Caliph. Take them, guards.
I've brought a slave-girl for you, Nureddene,
The Caliph's gift.

Nureddene

I'll take her, if I like her.
Life is my own again and all I love.
Great are thy mercies, O Omnipotent !

Curtain

SCENE 7

The Palace in Bassora

Ibn Sawy, Ameena, Nureddene, Anice-aljalice Doonya, Ajebe

Ibn Sawy

End, end embraces; they will last our life,
Thou dearest cause at once of all our woes
And their sweet ender ! Cherish her, Nureddene,
Who saved thy soul and body.

Nureddene

Surely I'll cherish

My heart's queen !

Anice-aljalice

Only your slave-girl.

Doonya

You've got a King,

You lucky child ! But I have only a Turk,
A blustering, bold and Caliph-murdering Turk
Who writes me silly letters, stabs my lovers
When they would run away with me, and makes
A general Turkish nuisance of himself.
'Tis hard, Sultan of Bassora great Sultan,
Grave high and mighty Nureddene ! thy sister
And subject—

Nureddene

Doonya, it is not Faeryland.

Doonya

It is, it is, and Anice here its queen.
A faery King of faery Bassora,
Do make a General of my general nuisance.
I long to be my lady Generaless
Of faery land, and ride about and charge
At thorns and thistles with a charming-stick,
With Balkis and Mymoona for my Captains—
They're very martial, King, bold swashing fighters !—

Nureddene

Ajebe our Treasurer.

Ajebe

To ruin you again?

Nureddene

We'll have Shaikh Ibrahim for Lord High Humbug
Of all our faeryland; shall we not, Anice ?

Ameena

What nonsense, children ! You a Sultan, child !

Nureddene

Your Sultan, mother, as I ever was.

Ibn Sawy

Let happiness flow out in smiles. Our griefs
Are ended and we cluster round our King.
The Caliph!

*Enter Haroun, Jaafar, Murad, Sunjar, guards with Alzaymi
and Almuene*

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

The peace, Commander of the Faithful !

Haroun al Rasheed

Noble Alfazzal, sit. Sit all of you.
This is the thing that does my heart most good
To watch these kind and happy looks and know
Myself for cause. Therefore, I sit enthroned,
Allah's vicegerent, to put down all evil
And pluck the virtuous out of danger's hand.
Fit work for Kings ! not merely the high crown,
And marching armies and superber ease.
Sunjar, Murad and Ajebe, you your King
Can best reward. But, Ajebe, in thy house
Where thou art Sultan, those reward who well
Deserve it.

Ajebe

They shall be my household queens,
Enthroned upon my either hand.

Haroun al Rasheed

'Tis well.

Sultan Alzayni, not within my realm
Shall Kings like thee bear rule. Great though thy crimes,
I will not honour thee with imitation,
To slay unheard. Thou shalt have judgment, King,
But for thy Vizier here, his crimes are open
And loudly they proclaim themselves.

Almuene

Lord, spare me.

Haroun al Rasheed

For some offences God has punished thee.

Shall I, His great Vicegerent, spare ? Young King
Of Bassora, to thee I leave thy enemy.

Almuene

I did according to my blood and nurture,
Do thou as much.

Nureddene

He has beguiled me, Caliph.
I cannot now pronounce his doom.

Haroun al Rasheed

Then I will.
Death at this moment ! And his house and fortune
Are to thy father due. Take him and slay.

Exeunt guards with Almuene

Let not his sad and guiltless wife be engulfed
In his swift ruin. Virtuous Alfazzal,—

Ibn Sawy

She is my wife's dear sister and my home
Is hers, my children will replace her son.

Haroun al Rasheed

All then is well. Anice, you're satisfied ?
I never was so scared in all my life
As when you rose against me.

Anice-aljalice

Pardon me !

SRI AUROBINDO MANDIR ANNUAL

Haroun al Rasheed

Fair children worthy of each other's love
And beauty ! till the Sunderer comes who parts
All wedded hands, take your delights on earth,
And afterwards in heaven. Meanwhile remember
That life is grave and earnest under its smiles,
And we too with a wary gaiety
Should walk its roads, praying that if we stumble,
The All-Merciful may bear our footing up
In His strong hand, showing the Father's face
And not the stern and dreadful Judge. Farewell.
I go to Roman wars. With you the peace !

Ibn Sawy

Peace with thee, just and mighty Caliph, peace.

Curtain

THE END

Exh 299³

It not his sad and guiltless wife be engulfed
 In his swift ruin? Virtuous Alfaggal, -
How See She is my wife's dear sister and my home
Her. Is here, my children will replace her son
 till then is well. (Since yours satisfied?)
 I never was so scared in all my life
 As when you rose against me
Ans. Pardon me!
Her. Fair children worthy of each other's love
 And beauty; till the Sinner comes who parts
 all wedded hands, takes your delights on earth
 And afterwards in heaven. Meanwhile remember
 His ~~She~~
 That life is grave and earnest under its smiles,
 And we too with a wary gait
 Should walk its roads, praying that if we stumble,
 The All-Merciful may bear our footing up.
 In His strong hand, showing the Father's face
 And not the stern and dreadful Judge. Farewell!
How I go to Roman wars. With you the peace!
 Peace with thee, just and mighty Caliph, peace
 Curtain.

THE END.

The Viziers of Bassora.
 a Romantic Comedy.
 by G. A. de Ghose.

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APPENDIX

When Sri Aurobindo was taken into custody in connection with the Alipore Bomb Incident, all papers found on search in his house were seized by the police. These included many of his writings of the time when he was at Baroda. They had nothing to do with the case, but were indiscriminately put in evidence in the Court of Mr. L. Birley and were sent up as exhibits to the Court of Session. They form part of the records. Only some of the letters were referred to by the Counsel for the prosecution, and the defence had to give a reply. Possibly for this purpose, copies were taken and that is how some letters of Sri Aurobindo written to his wife came to be published. The other papers remained with the records. Sri Aurobindo, as it appears from his *Kara Rahini*, was not aware of this fact and regretted the loss of his manuscripts. The records of the case were liable to destruction in 1936 and were actually sorted out and made ready for delivery to the Contractor for the purchase of old papers, when the then Record-Keeper, Sri Jitendra Nath Ghosh Dostidar (the present Superintendent of my Office), contacted Sri Jut Chandra Bhushan Banerjee, a very senior Vakil, and pleaded with him to take some steps for the preservation of the records of the memorable Alipore trial. Sri Jut Banerjee interviewed Mr. Ellis, the District Judge at that time, and requested him not to destroy the records. Mr. Ellis felt embarrassed by the Rules and therefore advised the Record-Keeper to show the matter as destroyed but to keep it in some corner of the Record Room. The records thus remained unofficially for more than 12 years. In 1949, they were rescued from dusty oblivion and transferred to a steel cupboard, specially provided, in the Judge's own retiring room. The papers, tied in small bundles, filled up all the shelves of the big cupboard and a search made at that time to find out important documents, particularly Aurobindo's writings, proved futile. In May 1951, Professor Dr. Kalidas Nag casually told the writer that it was a matter of extreme regret that though the records had been saved the important papers required were not there. The idea at that time was that either the Police or the Political Department had taken them for some purpose or other. Sri Nares Chandra Bose, Bar-at-Law, son of the late Atulya Charan

APPENDIX

Bose, Vakil, engaged for the Crown in the High Court, was then consulted, and he presented a set of paper-books kept in his father's library along with the records of the Bomb Case. The study of these books indicated a possible way of sorting the exhibits and a fresh attempt to search for the missing writings was made in the new light obtained and this effort bore fruit : almost all the writings of Sri Aurobindo brought into this case have been discovered. They include two complete dramas written in English.

After the find, the matter was reported to the Hon'ble Sri Niharendu Dutta Mazumdar, Minister, Judicial Department, Government of West Bengal, and he immediately proposed to publish some of the writings. The work of publication, however, has now been taken up by the Sri Aurobindo Ashram.

August 1951

S. C. CHAKRABARTI
(*Judge, Alipore*)

